

THE
LAWYERS IN LOVE,
&c. &c.

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THE
LAWYERS IN LOVE;

OR,

PASSAGES FROM THE LIFE

OF

A CHANCERY BARRISTER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"CAVENDISH," "THE PORT ADMIRAL," "WILL WATCH,"

&c. &c. &c.

' Love's a soldier!'—"No, he's not."
" Love's a sailor!"—"No such lot."
" Love's a doctor!"—"I deny it."
" Love's a parson!"—"Go and try it."
"Sith, then, Love be none of these,
Sits Love in the Common Pleas?"
" Love's a jury in himself,—
Love's a pris'ner ta'en by pelt;
Love alone will never spurn ye,
If ye make him your attorney;
While in love alone, we see
The advocate without a fee!"

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE
LAWYERS IN LOVE,

&c &c.

CHAPTER I.

“ Love alters not with his brief,
But bears it out e'en to the edge of doom,
If this be error, and upon me prov'd,
I never writ, and no man ever lov'd.”

SHAKSPEARE.

IF a mountain had been taken from the breast of Lord George at that moment, he could not have felt it to have been a greater relief than the *ruse*, mentioned in the last chapter, which “the old hand” played off on him. Lord George immediately answered,—

“ Oh, no, nothing.”

In another instant, forth came the words from Pleadit :—

“You may stand down, witness.”

“Sir, Sir! my Lord! Lord George! No!” cried the frantic attorney; then turning to his Lordship: “My Lord, all depends on our breaking down this witness.”

“Do you think I carry a sledge hammer in my waistcoat pocket?” angrily whispered back Lord George.

“You misunderstand me, Sir! you misunderstand me!” said the trembling attorney; “if you look in your brief, Sir, you will find all the facts.” And Lord George mechanically turned over one or two leaves of that precious document once so prized, but which now seemed invented for the express purpose of utterly puzzling any man who dared to look into it for information. It is true, that the purple marks of the claret were no longer to be traced on its pages, for those had been torn out, and re-copied by Lord George’s clerk, but whether it was owing to his blunders—to the confusion of the moment—or to that error into which so

so many brief compilers are so apt to fall, namely, needless verbosity—we know not, but nothing in that bulky mass of papers could, by any possibility, be distinguished, at least that was at all applicable to the matter now in hand.

“Well,” presently said the Judge, “is this witness to be cross-examined, *or* is he not?—that is the question.”

“Ask him anything,” whispered I, to his Lordship, “just to start with, and so not tire the Judge.”

“I will,” said Lord George, “Witness, who are you?”

At this question there was a roar of laughter, in which even the bench could not help joining.

“Oh dear! oh dear!” said Mr. Justice Wittiman, using that peculiar tone which Lord George had been imitating to me at breakfast, and which, as he had rightly said, ‘when once heard is never to be forgotten,’ “have we yet, my Lord George,”

pithily added his Lordship, "to learn who this witness is? I'm sure I thought I saw you take it down at the time this witness told us who he was. This is John Brown, who lives at Smithfield."

"I beg your pardon, my Lord; I meant not who is he, but what is he," faltered the the maiden junior for the defendant, trying to recover his lost ground.

"Oh dear, oh dear!" repeated his Lordship, "does not that follow the answer to the former question.—"I am a glazier by calling, and an occasional preacher of the word'"

"I beg your pardon, my Lord," again said Lord George, apologizing, but now beginning to be perfectly confused. By this time the attorney had discovered that nothing was discernible in his brief; but he also began shrewdly to suspect that Lord George had never looked into it, and so resolved to supply from memory those facts which it was quite clear would otherwise

remain unsupplied at all. Bending over, therefore, to whisper the important facts in Lord George's ear, he began by saying:—

“My Lord, this is a most notorious bad character.”

“You are doing very well George,” almost at the same time muttered Pierrepont, anxious to keep up to the utmost the pluck of his friend, which he saw was waning rapidly, and added, “Now don't be afraid of anything but saying too little; press this witness well, for I am quite sure, from the gingerly way in which Pleadit has handled him throughout, that he is altogether as rotten as touchwood.”

“Oh, yes sir! he is a most notorious bad character,”—at this precise moment once more said Dunvext's attorney. Thus ‘cockered’ up on all sides, Lord George, with plenty of metal rapidly coming to his aid, if he had only known how to use it, bolted out the following question:—

“ I say witness—now answer me witness. Are you not a notoriously bad character ?”

“ No sir,” most indignantly said the occasional preacher of the word.

“ I 'am not a notorious bad character,” muttered the Judge, unable to suppress a smile, as he noted down the answer, and added—“ have you any other question to ask, my Lord George ?”

“ Oh ! yes, my Lord—several,” replied our hero.

“ Will you ask them quickly, then ? I have several cases to dispose of, and I must be at chambers by two.”

“ A notorious bad character, indeed,” said Pleadit, speaking to himself, but laughing with the Jury, “ a most worthy dissenting minister !” Immediately at that word securing “ five worthy dissenters,” who before had resolved to give him the verdict, even if they were wrong in doing so ; but now internally vowed that he should have

it, wrong or right, and in spite of the Devil—whether it might not be by help of the Devil, in the shape of a perjured witness, they did not trouble themselves to enquire. By this time one of the attorney's clerks had found for his master the page in Lord George's brief which related to the cross-examining of this witness, and hastily reading it, the Solicitor whispered to Lord George—

“The impudent knave actually comes here in clothes that he has borrowed for the occasion; and that is supposed to be his master's coat he has on his back. Press him on that, Sir.”

“Are you dressed up for the occasion?” demanded Lord George.

“What!” demanded Pleadit, with a burst of laughter, either feigned or real, and thereby coming greatly to the rescue of the witness, who seemed to be uneasy under the line of examination, unskilfully as it was adopted, but who, at length, when he saw

his leader laughing, presumed to laugh too, and then replied—

“No—certainly not.”

Here the attorney, reading further from his brief, said—“Lord George, he has been drunk all the week.”

“Witness, have you been drunk all the week?” demanded the junior, in what was certainly a most junior style of cross-examination.

Pleadit laughed again—and this time involuntarily; for, in truth, these questions involved matters that could only have been expected to be wormed out of a witness by the exercise of much subtlety, and which no man would be fool enough to admit, if he could possibly avoid it; and, therefore, a worthless person, unscrupulous of his oath, would only have to give a blank denial to such a charge, to be perfectly safe—a danger which all skilful cross-examiners know how to avoid. After one or two similar questions, denied with the same fa-

cility, the attorney sat down, gnashing his teeth, and endeavouring greatly to thrust the nails of his hand into the palms thereof, and reiterating his vow, that he never would—no, never again!—give a brief to Mr. Keenhand. A vow, we may add, that he piously kept until the following morning, when he delivered to that gentleman a most voluminous bundle of papers, with a fee of fifty guineas; but, then, he absolved his conscience, by remarking, that *that* was a case in which he really could not do without him.

Keenhand could have told him, had he been present to hear this explanation, that he rarely got briefs on any other score; but that those made quite enough for him to mount to the top of the tree with, and he desired no other. However, Lord George, having exhausted his quiver, sat down; whereupon Pleadit, with a knowing look at the jury-box, accompanied with a smile of no doubtful meaning, lifted his head from

his second brief, which was to succeed the excitement, saying—

“You may stand down witness. Then addressing the Judge—“My Lord, that’s my case.”

“Very well,” said his Lordship.

Dunvext, in the meanwhile, was now drawing a little breath, after all his exertion, hoping, in his own mind, that he had very creditably discharged his duty to his client.

“*My* Lord George,” said the learned Judge, interrupting this dream of quiet, “will you address the Jury?”

Had a thunderbolt fallen at Lord George’s feet, it could scarcely have sounded more terribly than this simple intimation of the Judge—That the opportunity for displaying all his eloquence had arrived.

At first, the maiden junior began to meditate what would be the effect of a magnanimous disclaimer of any intentions to trespass on the time of the court. But his

attorney soon put to flight such base ideas of surrender, by whispering—

“Now, my Lord, give it to them well! don’t spare them, and make the most of their hobbling into court with their one witness—don’t forget to let into them—that’s the only hope we have.”

Thus adjured, poor Lord George, with a deep sigh, regained his trembling legs, entertaining all the while most substantial doubt whether they were his legs on which he was standing, or whether it was his head that had the honour of supporting him. At first he had fondly imagined that there were one or two points on which he had some remarks to make to the potent twelve; and, therefore, clearing his throat for his very good voice, he thus began—

“May it please your Lordship—Gentlemen of the Jury, the client whom I have the honour to represent is most unfortunate!” but when he got thus far he discovered that he had either made a mistake

when he imagined that there was something he intended to say to the Jury, or that he *had forgotten* what that something was—in either case the result was thè same. Ably as he had sounded the key-note, not another strain would follow. The Judge, the Jury, the witnesses, and more than all, his brethren of the Bar, seemed to be dancing around him, praying to be informed what it really was he had to urge touching his unfortunate client. And still as he endeavoured to find language to convey the astounding facts, or, indeed, even to think what were those important matters, that but a few minutes since seemed plain to his comprehension—argument, language, memory, every earthly thing that he most desired seemed to fly from him—but, the most direful conviction, that there he was, perched up in the Bail Court, the observed of all observers, endeavouring to exorcise into being, sundry words and images that had lately appeared most docile, but now had hurried from him in most direct rebellion.

Now, too, first came upon Lord George, with indescribable certainty, a most entire conviction of his failure; he felt that he must fail, and nothing could help him out of it; suddenly there occurred to him the expedient of trying a new beginning, or as he, in half sea phrase afterwards termed it, taking a new departure, and so he began again—

“ May it please your Lordship, gentlemen of the Jury, the client whom I have the honour to represent is most unfortunate!” But here *da capo*, he came to the same irremediable stick as before. A third time he tried the experiment, and still in the same sonorous voice, while Mr. Justice Wittiman’s glass was upon him, observing him most intently, and a smile played round the Judge’s mouth as Lord George repeated—

“ May it please your Lordship, gentlemen of the Jury, the client whom I have the honour to represent is most unfortu-

nate!"—still he got no further, until Wit-
tieman, with a gravity that was enough to
convulse a million of spectators, and still
preserving that inimitable tone of voice to
which reference has been so often made,
now observed with the utmost courtesy—

“ Pray proceed, *my* Lord, pray proceed ;
so far as you *have* gone you have the Court
most entirely *with* you.”

The clever, the beautiful sarcasm of this
speech, was so razor like in its edge, that
at first Dunvext actually thought the Judge
was complimenting him, until the suppres-
sion of laughter ; almost of applause, that
followed, caused his Lordship to think over
the speech just made, and then, of course,
instantly to see the bitter witticism it car-
ried. This did not tend greatly to assure
his trembling nerves, but putting him on
his metal, he determined to make an effort
to retrieve the blunders of the day, and
went on to say, in a most dreadfully hesi-
tating and broken tone—

“If you believe the witness for the plaintiff, gentlemen, of course you will give your verdict accordingly, gentlemen; but if you agree with me in my opinion of that witness, you will accordingly give your verdict that is, I mean, the other way, gentlemen; but in whatever manner that verdict may be given, gentlemen, I am sure it will be given in such a manner as—as—as to be perfectly satisfactory to all parties.”

And down his Lordship sat, thus leaving considerable doubt, it is true, as to what he really meant; but, perhaps, it would have been unfair to expect too much perspicuity in this particular, and when, at length, Lord George did resume his seat, in strict accordance with his poem that he had read at breakfast, the perspiration might have been seen rolling from his features, not in drops, but in streams. While his Lordship was busily applying cambric to this affliction, the Judge, with the strongest assumption of all those peculiarities that Lord George

had that morning been making a subject of comment, asked very significantly—

“Do you call *no* witnesses, *my* Lord George?” at the same time weighing his eye-glass, and swinging it up to the bridge of his nose, and fixing all his attention on the unfortunate junior.

“No, my Lord; no witnesses,” innocently replied Lord George; scarcely noticing any particularity in the Judge’s aspect, so deeply engrossed was he in the horrors of the moment, and full of thought whether he had really done his case so dreadfully as he feared, and other matters of this stamp. But the Judge was determined, seemingly, that the counsel for the defendant should not get off, and, once more weighing the celebrated spectacles, he said very significantly:

“*My* Lord George, do you not call one witness?”

“No, my Lord, none.”

“What! *my* Lord George, do you not

even call Mr. Dundas ; a supposed relation of *my* Lord *Mel-ville* ?”

When Dunvext heard these words he started—looked at his Lordship for a few moments, and then exclaiming in a low voice—“What an outrageous fool I have been all this while!” replied with a low bow to the Judge’s look of intelligence—muttered an indistinct “No, my Lord ;” and then, suddenly becoming deadly pale, he rushed precipitately out of court.

Everybody stared—looked—wondered ; most men thought his Lordship ill ; others—but they were very few, and very young in the secrets of their profession—supposed that he had got another brief in some other court ; but I, who was certain that neither of these two things formed the cause of his absence, having distinctly caught the words, “Dundas and *my* Lord *Mel-ville*,” at once caught sight of the full truth, and hurried after his Lordship to terminate all doubt by hearing his own account.

“What is the matter?” said I, when I reached him in the passage leading to the King’s Bench. “Why have you made confusion worse confounded, by running away, and not even waiting to take the verdict?”

“Take the devil!” said George, half laughing, half horrified. “Who do you think my companion of this morning turns out to be?”

“Mr. Justice Wittiman himself,” said I.

“You’ve hit it,” was his reply. “What a laugh he has got against me.”

“I have no doubt,” replied I, “he has laughed heartily at you, as you richly deserved; but come—come back into court, and mind your case.”

“I!” said Lord George, “I venture back into that accursed purgatory? Not for all the briefs, nor all the causes that ever were seen in the Attorney-General’s chambers.”

“Oh! my dear fellow, you must indeed be joking; do not be such an idiot as that—think what will be said.”

“Oh!” resumed the impetuous younger son; “I do not care what is said or sung, provided I am not called upon to hear Johnny saying again, ‘Won’t you call even Mr. Dundas, a supposed relation of *my* Lord *Mel*-ville?’”

And, in spite of all the arguments I could use, away his Lordship hurried—whip’t off his wig and gown—jumped into the carriage with me, and away we drove as far as my chambers in Lincoln’s Inn, where I had an appointment.

There the unfortunate Dunvext appeared quite lost in his own thoughts, pacing hurriedly to and fro my room—muttering to himself several times,---“What a sell! what an infernal sell!—If ever there was a junior sold I’m the man!”—then waving his hand to me, he rushed down stairs, and hurried off towards St. Paul’s.

CHAPTER II.

“Oh, where is my lover? Oh, where is he gone!”

OLD SONG.

A DAY had passed after my parting with Lord George, and Pierrepont, whom I had to meet on other business, told me that the verdict had of course gone for the plaintiff; the wonder would have been, under the extraordinary circumstances of the case, how any one could have expected it to have gone otherwise. The solicitor, of course, ground off one of his teeth, and tore his hair, and all that sort of thing; but as an occasional new wig, and the assistance of a dentist, are things which every prudent solicitor counts on as a corollary to

the yearly expenses of his certificate, this deep despair did not strike us as any thing out of the common.

Had we been told that either plaintiff or defendant were satisfied with the action, then, I grant, we might have suffered severely from the effects of extreme surprise. As it was, every thing went in its usual course, so we wasted no discussion on such points. The question, however, which arose between us—Pierrepont and myself—and which neither of us could answer, was this:—

“Where was Lord George?” Conscious of having smiled once or twice—for who could entirely have avoided it during the progress of the trial—I thought his Lordship might have seen me, and taken offence; and feeling that, however natural for us, this might have been very annoying for him; I really was anxious for an opportunity of making a due apology. But Pierrepont had entertained the same no-

tion. Each thought the other must know something about his Lordship's movements, but both remained in consummate ignorance. Perhaps then he had taken offence at both of us, a thing not at all unlikely—since with most ardent temperaments, offence is a little matter much more easily taken than atoned for.

However, let the truth of the above question be what it might, it seemed we were all of us doomed to remain in suspense, at least for some time. The second day succeeded the first, and still no intelligence of his Lordship. The third—the fourth—and so on rolled away, until at length, resolving to have on my conscience no sin of omission, I wrote a note, and sent it to his chambers. Here, however, they professed to know nothing whatever of him, referring us to his father's house in Grosvenor-square. Little as I liked that any servant of mine should go to the family house, I sent to Grosvenor-square; but if little

was known of him at the chambers, less was known at the mansion, and the answer returned was—

“That his Lordship was most likely gone out of town for a few days, and should have the note on his return.” A fortnight—two months rolled away; the chambers at length were shut up—the return from the Square was still “gone into the country,” and not all Pierrepont’s efforts, or mine, through every channel of acquaintance we thought likely, could gain any intelligence of the missing junior.

At last, one day I went to the club, took up a paper, and there I saw the following paragraph in the Morning Post:—
“The friends of the cause of Don Pedro will be delighted to hear that the ranks of that illustrious Monarch have recently gained the inestimable services of the Right Honourable Lord George Dunvext, a young nobleman, whom many of our readers will immediately recognize as a

formerly well known officer in the Navy, though at the time of his service, the want of any brilliant opportunities did not permit him to add to his noble name any of those more redoubtable distinctions, which his well known valour would, questionless, have earned for him, had any occasion of the kind presented itself. Don Pedro has availed himself of this accession to his standard, to grant to the distinguished recruit the rank of Captain of a Troop of Cavalry, and we have no doubt that his Lordship will soon earn, at the hands of a grateful Prince, distinguished promotion.”

“Alas!” thought I, “and must the aspiring blood of Lancaster sink in the ground? Is this the end of all the Marquis’s thousands, and is this the conclusion of the bold boy that looked on ‘bullying the Judges’ as an afternoon pastime, and thought that learning should have a ‘royal road,’ at least for him?—Enjoyment come without pain, reward without labour, and honour without

ter-in-law, Lady Sidney Dunvext, who lives not far off, and, I suspect, is almost as much hampered as myself. It is one of the worst complaints of the peerage, is debt; and, I am sorry to say, that it is as hereditary in our large family as the mastership of the King's toothpick, of which the O'Mortgage family have been the hereditary grand-keepers, *you* may know how many centuries—but I don't."

"And so, in fact, you are come to consult me how to pay your debts?"

"Fiddle! my fine fellow! why, I might as well consult you how to reach the moon—both are equally impossible. Still, I should have no objection to hear a little advice as to how I may best smooth down the bristled crest of my difficulties, as my governor calls them."

"Pray, what name do *you* give the process."

"Oh! I call it ameliorating one's excitements."

“ May fate be very kind to you, Counsellor ! but you seem to be existing in a charming state of viridity ! Why, the wizard, Michael Scott, would even have failed to extract money out of the Marquis O’Mortgage — seeing it is his Lordship’s favourite boast, that he has never beheld that article for the last twenty years, and has almost forgotten that there is such a thing in existence. Push the wine this way.”

“ Well ! truly, George, you have made out as good a case for leaving town, as Napoleon had for quitting Moscow. It appears rather too warm to hold you. But how came you to find me out ?”

“ Why, when my dad expressed a sort of intimation, that my debts might as well be settled, I thought I’d hear some opinion on the point ; and, going to your chambers, and finding you on circuit, I resolved to come down to the North, and have a little chat with you, on the score of my liabilities, and then pay a visit to my pretty sis-

much a prisoner as before I left the navy. Still I think its healthy—decidedly healthy—and I have some doubts whether a man does well to get rid of his involvements while on half-pay, unless, indeed, he gets married. And then, to be sure, a quarrel with his wife every morning before breakfast may, in some degree, supply that necessary stimulant to the mind, so much recommended by all medical writers on insanity. However, you see one morning they would insist upon serving one of my writs upon my old dad, just as he was getting into his carriage; after which he positively declared that I must either pay my debts, or take a house to myself; and, faith, he would have carried his threat into execution if I had not happily informed him, that the mistake was one which had occurred through his juvenile appearance. This appeased him, and—

“And, I suppose, he handed out the money.”

are suspended. You have no notion of the pleasant excitement of dodging a sheriff's officer, who holds a little slip of parchment, for the cab in which you are driving—up one street and down another, and having to look considerably sharp, and drive still faster into each Park-gate—never mind going over a few nurse-maids and children—lest you should be stopped at the entrance, and solicited to pay a visit to those dull palaces which the sheriffs of London and Middlesex so generously maintain for the entertainment of the poor, about the neighbourhood of Chancery-lane, with iron bars to their windows, &c. &c.”

“Oh!—come, you are joking, you don't mean to say that things have proceeded to this pass.”

“Pass! no, it was any thing but pass, and so you would have said, if you had had to manœuvre your way out of your own house as I used to do out of my governor's in Grosvenor-square. Why, I was almost as

“In what way?”

“Why, in every way and in all directions ; I couldn’t walk down Bond-street for my hatter ; nor venture into Piccadilly for my cab-builder ; St. James’s is barricadoed by a sphinx of a tailor ; Pall-Mall rendered impervious by a cormorant of a boot-maker, and Charing-cross reduced to a dead blockade by a rogue of a tobacconist.”

“What a barricade !—Why, it’s a perfect revolution of July with you.”

“Oh, quite so ! only the worst of it is, I couldn’t call out the troops to my assistance. Egad ! if I could, a commission in the guards would be worth no end of purchase. Fancy the delight of charging down one’s duns, as a donkey would destroy thistles. A large rent-roll would then grow quite contemptible.”

“But you don’t mean to say that you have any writs out against you ?”

“I should think I had, my friend ; only, like boroughs convicted of bribery, the writs

debt. How have I been ?—in debt. What brought me here ?—my debts. What's the best news ?—Brougham's bill for the protection of debt."

"Your debts! Pooh! never mind your debts, provided you have given your creditors no security."

"Ah! but I have; you know my imprudent generosity. One fellow was so very pressing that I sent him, before I left town, an old bunch of keys, the only security that I ever heard of a younger brother possessing."

"Not so bad; but when did you leave town? I suppose you are on your way to the Moors."

"Why, as to that I suppose I am; for I have been going to the dogs this long while, and for the Moors in particular, if I could get anything out of them, I would be off to the Moors directly, for I have long ago exhausted the Jews, and the matter of leaving town could be a point of no hesitation to a man who is so much in request as myself."

CHAPTER IV.

“ Pay, pay, pay !

All must be paid to day.”—Song.

MAGNUM, in the meanwhile, had taken the first hint and vanished. While, as soon as the door was shut, Pierrepont, turning to his Lordship, helped him to a slice of cutlet, exclaiming as he did so,—

“ Who would have thought of seeing you, old Racket ? How are you ? how have you been ? what’s the best news ? what brought you here ? ”

“ Zounds ! Counsellor,” said the other, have some mercy in your examinations. I swear, not even * * * * shall stand excused for asking me to answer more than three questions at once. How am I ?—in

kind enough to break my back, I believe, but nothing more ; however, Sir, as he is a friend of your's, never mind." Then in a lower key, he muttered to himself as he left the room : -- " I'm only the clerk !"

are in a perfect state of blockade, and as difficult of access as the Cham of Tartary. Just turn your servants out, will you?" said he, pointing to Magnum and Nisi, the one rubbing his back, and the other his head. "Here, give me a chair, and don't let the cutlet get cold. I'm sorry I have been obliged to break the necks of a few of those fellows of yours; but I suppose you follow my plan, and let it all go down in the bill? Here Pierrepont, my boy, the pleasure of a glass of wine."

But Pierrepont, who seemed to prefer attending to one request at a time, turned to his clerk, saying—

"Leave us Nisi; I will ring for you presently."

"Why," said the lively scribe, turning towards the door, rubbing his loins most pathetically with one hand, while he almost shook the other at his master's newly arrived friend; "I suppose I'm not particularly wanted; that gentleman has only been

do you and Nisi turn him out ; I won't see him on any terms."

Magnum quickly went to the rescue, but his appearance seemed to have little beneficial effect—for in a few moments another violent fall was heard—a few most martial steps followed in the passage, and the door suddenly flew open to admit the entrance of a young man of middle height, possessing a fair and handsome countenance, shaded by a profusion of light curls. Pierrepont, on hearing the door assailed, had risen in a considerable rage, and entertained rather violent intentions himself, but starting back as soon as he beheld the intruder, surprise and anger on his countenance gave way to pleasure, and he warmly held forth his hand, exclaiming—

“What! is it you, my Lord?”

“Hush,” said the intruder, putting his finger to his lips ; “not a word, my boy. It isn't my ghost that's clear. I'll explain all the rest presently But as for you, you

Pierrepoint wont see any one, except on business."

"Out of the way, you flibberty-gibbet. I tell you, I not only can come in, but I will come in ; and as for your master not seeing me, only on business—business be d—d. I never had anything to do with any in my life, and I don't intend to begin."

"Then, you can't come in, Sir."

"But I tell you I will come in, you little fool ; do you think I'm come to serve a writ ?"

"We know nothing of writs here, Sir."

"Then you are a devilish lucky rascal ; so stand out of the way, or I shall pitch you down stairs."

Nisi, it seems, was not at all daunted with this threat, for a struggle was forthwith heard in the passage, and then a fall, when Pierrepoint, thinking it high time to interfere, turned to Magnum, saying—

"Go out, and see who this impertinent fellow is that insists on being admitted, and

to be heart and soul engaged in packing the portmanteau.

“What Sir, are you here—why, where did you come from? You are never in the way when you are wanted.”

“Mr. Magnum, Sir, sent me up.”

— “Hark, there is a knock at the door, go down and see if that is any business that you can attend to; if not, remember I am not at home, except for business, to any one.”

Too glad of the opportunity to be off, Nisi darted out of the room, and meeting the butler on the stairs, bringing in the tray, communicated Pierrepont's orders, and then went to answer the bell at the door. Magnum in the mean time laid the tray, and placed the wine before his master, who seated himself, and was in the very act of doing justice to a veal cutlet, when the voice of Nisi was heard in a loud *tone in the passage without, exclaiming—*

“You can't come in, Sir; I tell you Mr.

of which he had prudently disrobed himself, he shook his fist at the form of the departed butler, and added "*sotto voce*—"

"Very well, Mr. Butler, much obliged for your kind intentions; but I'll be even with you for all that, before long. You shall find for the future, that half a pint of my master's wine a-day shall serve you, as well as your present bottle—and as for you, Mr. Pierrepont, it is all very fine to say you will get rid of me; but the question is, how? You are in love—so am I. You adore a darling, angelic, and beautiful divinity—so do I. You have love letters to write—so have I. I carry your love letters—so I do my own. You love the mistress—I love the maid. What then—do you think you can ever spare me? Excuse me, Sir, the thing is impossible!" Here Pierrepont's step was heard advancing to the sitting room, and in an instant *Nisi* was down on his knees, abandoning all his previous gesticulations, and pretending

“You shall have the luncheon in a moment, Mr. Charles,” said the butler, “but as to saying where your clerk may be, Sir, I had rather have nothing to do with that, for that is a matter quite beyond my management! a more lazy, mischievous young man I never met with, he minds nothing that I say to him, Sir, and not much any one else, saving your presence, I suspect.” Here Nisi, who was peeping out from under the table, gave a grin at the butler, that boded him little good in the enjoyment of his office. While Pierrepont, peremptorily waving his hand, exclaimed—

“Ha! I thought as much. Yes, yes! it must come to that, I must discharge him. Make haste with the luncheon, while I go and wash my hands,” and, leaving the room, the butler quickly followed him.

Nisi waited a few moments, to be sure that the coast was clear, and then quickly creeping from under the table cloth, and dragging out after him the wig and gown,

But so far from luncheon being ready, Nisi, on the instant that he heard the hand of Mr. Pierrepont touch the lock of the sitting room door, scrambled wig, gown, and all on, under the nearest table, his heart beating so loudly that it almost proclaimed where the missing culprit was hiding.

“It is very extraordinary,” said Pierrepont, “I could almost have sworn that I heard a voice, or voices in this room, but”—looking round it—“yet the fellow cannot have gone away long, for he has left the books half packed, and not a vestige of anything to eat—and that infernal case of mine will be on in half an hour at the outside. This comes of taking a tenant’s son to oblige him! I really must discharge him! Magnum! Magnum!” and pulling down first one bell rope, and then the other, the butler at length entered, and received orders to get ready the desired meal immediately, and to find where Nisi was hiding.

ner in which that respectable member of the commonwealth—the barrister's clerk—is treated by the landladies of the circuit!

“Is there a damp bed in the house?—It will do very well for the clerk!

“Is there a fire-place that does nothing but smoke?—It will do very well for the clerk!

“Is there a larder that's full of cold mutton?—Never mind, for it's only the clerk!

“Now, then, Gentlemen of the Jury—” but what was to follow at this part of the clerk's harangue was little expected by the impassioned speaker—who, having his eyes intently fixed on the mirror, with no slight admiration of the imposing appearance that his borrowed robes threw round him, and his voice elevated into a very forensic scream, never heard nor heeded the angry voice, and heavy footstep of his master, as he rushed up stairs, exclaiming—

“Nisi! Nisi! where are you Sir? why is not luncheon ready?”

cruelly inflicted upon, and which are so patiently—I may add so nobly—borne by that deserving, but ill-appreciated link in the grand chain of society—you must, of course, know, Gentlemen, that I allude to the barrister's clerks! What, then! Gentlemen, will you believe it possible, that this outraged member of an industrious community no sooner finds himself comfortably settled in one town, than—‘*Budge!*’ becomes the word, and he is forthwith conveyed to another. Hardly is he permitted to pay his adieux to the new mistress of his affections *there*—scarcely has he time to get even his clothes home from the washerwoman, when away he is hurried!—to the next town, as the disgusting place is called—and which may either be Liverpool or Novogorod, as the commission to a mere Chief-justice may please to dictate!

“Neither, to an intelligent Jury of Gentlemen, like yourselves, can there, at this civilized period, remain unknown the man-

barristers read all the books they give us poor devils of clerks to pack, before they are brought on circuit! I guess we shouldn't be quite so much troubled on the matter; but, alas! we are a learned, a deserving, and an ill-treated race;" and Mr. Nisi, as if to prove these words, rose from his kneeling position, and purely, it would seem for a little recreation and unbending of mind and body, approached a wig and gown which one of his employer's learned brethren had left on the sofa, while he went to take a mouthful of fresh air, and now Nisi, adjusting first the gown, and then the powdered curls, and placing himself carefully before a large mirror, proceeded to imitate those august functionaries who assist in the dispensation of law and eloquence as follows:—

“And here, Gentlemen of the Jury, permit me to assure you, from the bottom of my heart, that I could not lay my head upon my pillow this night, without temporarily adverting to the wrongs which are so

engaged in packing the same at the period of time to which we refer, in the sitting-room of his master.

“No!” said Mr. Nisi, addressing that important personage himself, “I certainly never can get them all into this portmantau; already it has given ominous hints of bursting.” And the barrister’s clerk leaned back to apply his handkerchief to his forehead, as he kneeled beside the huge “leathern conveniency” we have named; and sighing deeply, cast a most woeful glance upon the pile of thick volumes, bound in calf, with backs of red, and golden letters, that mocked his endeavours.

“Plague on all great lawyers! say I;” resumed the baffled youth, after divers shakes of the head, and sundry groanings of the spirit, “and all other men who expect that a human being should carry so much learning in his head, when it won’t even go into his chest. I shouldn’t even complain if there were a sort of moral police to make certain

CHAPTER III.

“Ah! canst thou fly, and thus forget—”

“My love?” Ah no! good youth, your debt.”

SIMPSON.

FROM all that I could learn it seems that the first interview between Pierrepont and Lord George took place, not in London, but on circuit, at the city of Carlisle, where his Lordship, ever in a row, contrived to make an onslaught upon Pierrepont's clerk—a mischievous, but not ill-meaning lad, the son of a tenant belonging to Pierrepont, and to whom he had given orders that his portmanteau should be packed, ready for starting at the earliest notice *of the assizes being terminated*; and Nisi, for that was his clerk's name, was busily

give me his address, and I will write to him."

Accordingly, I waited, and expected, as usual, to hear from one of my young friends, but as is often the case with old men, I was for a long time disappointed, and at length, when we did meet, he had such facts to tell, such a combination of adventures to detail, that the narrative was more like an Epic of fiction than a narrative of sober fact.

of him, and I am quite sure he must have taken very deep offence, or he would, at least, have applied to borrow some money of me ages ago—How long has he been in town?”

“Why, he ought to be ashamed to say it, he has quite deserted his old friends at the Bar, as well as the Bar itself; he has absolutely been months at the West End, and never has allowed us to know that he was in existence.”

“Well!” said I, “that is really too bad; but I suppose now we shall see him.”

“Why,” said Pierrepont, “to day he has sent another letter to me to say, ‘that he shall call and see me this week,’ but I have written back to tell him, that unless he calls to-night, I shall be on the Northern Circuit, to which I return to-morrow.”

“Well! if he comes, be sure you give him my message, and tell him to come here; and if he does not come, you must write me from the Northern Circuit, and

a few days Lord George was temporarily forgotten. Now and then, when my head pressed a sleepless pillow, I used occasionally to speculate as to what had become of that living likeness of Isabella, but regret that his impracticable nature, and the fear that nothing could ever steady him, made me think the wisest course on my part, would be a forgetfulness of his existence ; and as he never wrote, this was too easy a task.

One morning Pierrepont called upon me on some business, and—

“ Who,” said he, “ do you think I heard from last night ? ”

I soon resigned the task of guessing—when he at once told me—

“ No less a person than our old friend, Lord George Dunvext.”

“ Is it possible ? Well, and what has he to say for himself, the vagabond ? how is it he has never written nor called to see me ? Tell him, when you write, it is very shabby

merit? Well, I suppose the first thing he will do will be to earn a broken head; the child of luxury will then have to sleep in a ditch, and ‘none so poor to do him reverence;’ and yet, why mourn? this is the fate of all of us, sooner or later, and perhaps those are the happiest to whom it soonest arrives; at any rate, even this is better than his having been seduced by a little temporary success, to go the dull hopeless round of a circuit, year after year, always hoping, never doing! Dying slowly of a broken heart, and in the process of the death, losing involuntarily every particle of charity for those around him!”

“Pierrepont,” said I, “was in this a wiser man than myself; when once convinced that his friend was unfit to cope with his profession, he perceived that that accident which soonest delivered him from it, would be the greatest blessing—it was a *cruel remedy, but a brief one.*”

The whirl of life was still upon me; in

“ Well, then, to the point. The simplest mode is, to call your creditors together, and enter into some arrangement. Have you got a list of your debts ?”

“ Yes, I have, most providentially, got one in my pocket, or pocket-book, or port-manteau, or somewhere ;” and Lord George, extracting, with some difficulty, an elegant morocco case, began to unfold a host of notes and billets-doux, most of them written in a marvellously effeminate hand, interspersed, every now and then, with a lock of hair, or a small piece of poetry, till, at length, he came to one document more thickly folded than the rest, which he began slowly to unrol. The writing was very fine and very close ; and, as Pierrepont watched his Lordship, the latter, with the utmost gravity, continued to disclose, fold after fold, until the barrister could contain himself no longer, and, bursting into a hearty roar, exclaimed—

“ There must be some mistake here—this must be your pedigree.”

“ Why, no,” replied his Lordship, without ceasing his occupation—“ not the pedigree, but a branch of the family connexions.”

“ What!” said Pierrepont, “ a branch!—it might serve for a list of customers for Coutts’ bank.”

“ Ah! that’s what I call my system of equity. You see, if I should ever stand for Westminster, it would be so very prejudicial to my canvass to leave it in the power of any jealous, snivelling dog to say—‘ Ah! you used to deal with neighbour Smith over the way, but you never brought any of your favours to my shop, ’till you wanted to have my vote and interest.’ Now, calling on a man for what you can get, is a principle as yet so wholly unknown to English elections, that one wouldn’t like to be the first to introduce it—d’ye see ?”

“ Ah, I comprehend the delicacy of your position.”

“Oh, my dear boy! I am the most delicate fellow in the world on these matters ; —another slice of tongue if you please.”

“Certainly ; you have followed up your principle inimitably well. I see they are every man of them here.”

“Every one of them, from Gunter down to Hoby. But, excellent as my intention was, I am afraid, as some minister said before me—I have made a number of good men very ungrateful.”

“Very likely ; I see you have not stood upon political predilections. No one would even suspect a party bias here —Whigs, Tories and Radicals all find a place.”

“Why, yes! I flatter myself that is one of the inherent parts of my system. No mean, exclusive dealing with me!—let every man have a fair trial ; while, if more bigotted partizans find fault with it, the answer is ready at a moment’s notice. The man who deals with his enemies has an opportunity of letting them enjoy the benefit of ten

years credit, and at the last he has all their influence, because if they do not serve their debtor, they may not be paid at all ; while, on the other hand, the man who deals with his friends has another hold upon them—in the ordinary acceptance of mankind, called gratitude.—But this, I should say is a much weaker tie, from what little I have ever seen of the article. I merely throw out these hints, at starting, to shew you—”

“—Oh, precisely, I understand—to show that there is some sense even in extravagance. But, however, a truce to jesting, let us see if we really can extricate you from your difficulties!—Though, how have you contrived in the few years, since you left the Bar, to get into all this debt?”

“Oh ! my dear fellow, if you are going to preach a sermon, I must plead the privilege of the Peerage, and go to sleep. All I can say is, that you know as much as I. “There is the amount, fourteen thousand

some odd hundreds. The only question is, how to pay it?"

"Well," said Pierrepont, shrugging his shoulders, and smiling at the other's manner, "I thank my stars it is your case, and not mine—and as you seem to admit that it is all due and properly owing, the only course for you to take, is to let your Solicitor call your creditors together, and make some arrangement with them. As, for instance, that they shall not molest you, on condition of your setting aside, for the gradual payment of your debts, a part of your income—say a fourth."

"The sacrifice is heavy, but, however, I agree to it."

"Well, the amount here by this list, to speak in round numbers, is fourteen thousand, seven hundred and fifty pounds."

"Exactly."

"And now, what is the amount of your income?"

"One hundred and eighty pounds a-year."

“What,” exclaimed Pierrepont, starting back, and bursting into a second hearty laugh.

“One hundred and eighty pounds a-year, and my father says it is too much.”

“Patience on us! you will just be two-thirds of a century paying off your incumbrances.”

“Much about that time. Never mind, I am only just thirty now, so that at a hundred and two I shall be a free man again.”

“A charming consolation.”

“Very—now that is one plan; but the Marquis likewise tells me that there are three others.”

“Pray, what are they, my Lord?”

“A new profession—or Parliament—or marrying an heiress. Now, let us consider these serious questions ‘*seriatum*.’ A new profession—I have no objection to that. Marrying an heiress—I don’t like on principle. And, as for Parliament—to tell you

the truth, while I yet had some little property in the shape of my aunt's legacy of fifteen thousand pounds, I tried the hustings three times as a Liberal in vain ; but now I have nothing to lose, they tell me, I am ' sure to be returned as a Conservative.' ”

“ Ah ! of course, and double your debts in six months.”

“ No ! that course won't do.”

“ The professions offer a more likely scheme. There's the Bar—but that you have tried. The Spanish Legion, it seems, you don't like. And so, having left the Navy in disgust, suppose you try the Army.”

“ Oh ! d—— the Army ! as I have told you before, I should prefer going into the Church.”

“ Well ! that would do—I had forgot the Church. It's a great pity your principles are too strict for an heiress ; for I myself am obliged to give up one who has fourteen thousand a-year.”

“ Are you sure she will have so much ? ”

“ Certain; the estates are left under the uncle’s will.”

“ And you really are obliged to give her up yourself ?”

“ Most indubitably I am.”

“ And nothing against her reputation ?”

“ Oh ! no !—she is as chaste as the moon, for aught I know.”

“ Then, by Jove, I’ll have a shot at her !”

“ But, my dear fellow, I thought your principle.”

“ Oh ! as to principle—when said principle, I merely meant the uncertainty of these matters ; for I never met with a man who married an heiress yet, that got any thing by her, except a family. But here, however, I think I see my way. You can introduce me. Give me her address at once.” And Lord George, taking out his tablets, drew forth his pencil, and prepared to write down the whereabouts of the fair damsel he seemed so anxious to create the Right Honourable Lady George Dunvext.

“ But, remember, my boy,” said Pierrepont, “ I’m going to refuse her myself.”

“ Generous fellow !” said Lord George.

“ Moreover,” quoth the friend, “ she is exceeding ugly.”

“ She has fourteen thousand a-year,” said his Lordship.

“ And, I hear,” returned Pierrepont, “ she is crooked in the spine.”

“ She has fourteen thousand a-year,” repeated his friend.

“ More than this, I caution you, that she squints most vilely, and has a most dreadful temper.”

“ She has fourteen thousand a-year,” reiterated his Lordship.

“ Well! and now the worst is to come. When first I knew her, she really promised to be a pretty girl; there was a slight sort of flirtation between us, and I once thought, notwithstanding the obligation to marry her, that I could actually have got up a very fair sensation of tenderness, if not of

actual love. But that's at an end; for what do you think has happened to her?"

"Perhaps she has taken to carry her head under her arm,—or wears her eyes in the middle of her forehead,—or has slipt her ankle down her throat!"

"No! that might be endured; but what say you to this—the poor creature has been attacked with the small-pox, and not a vestige of her former beauty remains, I am told. In short, she is seamed from one end of her face to the other."

"Why, I never heard of such a lovely creature in my life. Where is she to be found?"

"Well, if you can stand all this, you really deserve to have her address."

"Tell me that, and we will then hold a council of war, how we can get her."

"Well, that's not the rub; I will first tell you how I am situated, and then you can judge for yourself; but allow me to remark, '*en passant*,' that you ought to

consider whether there is not something very heartless in thus determining to marry a poor girl, for whom you can have no possible affection."

"Pierrepont, excuse my telling you so, but you are a fool; I thought you had known George Dunvext too long, and too intimately, to accuse him of ever having any thing like a heart; other men, with less courage, might pretend to argue the question with you, but I at once throw the gauntlet down. To marry a woman for her money alone is a most heartless act, which would only be made worse by pretending to justify it. Then, on the other hand, I have no doubt that she, in marrying me, will be guilty of an act equally selfish, if ever she does such a thing, and for the mere sake of becoming Lady George Dunvext—will marry a man for whom she cares not a straw. I never knew one of your large heiresses yet, who wasn't, to the pin's point, as worldly as any of her suitors."

“Well, there may be something in that.”

“Oh! rely on it there is; and depend on it, this said flame of your’s estimates to the last penny every fraction that she possesses, and all the wordly advantages it will be likely to bring her. I never pretended to any virtue of any kin^d in my life, therefore, neither man nor woman can ever insinuate that I have taken them in. In the case of my marrying this girl for her fortune, I hold it to be quite diamond cut diamond—it’s a very foolish step, I admit, to marry at all, and still worse to marry an heiress, who, ten to one, is a disagreeable, presumptuous, ill-bred, odious animal. But when the devil drives who can control his fate? So no more preaching, but let us hear all about her. Tell her, if your conscience pricks you, that you suspect my motives to be mercenary—that you have great doubts, or great fears, or some trash of that sort.”

“But, suppose she taxes you with the crime?”

“ Well, then, of course I shall admit it.”

“ But, then, you’ll lose the lady.”

“ Well, my boy ! I can survive the loss ; there is as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it.”

“ Well, you are a funny fish yourself.”

“ To be sure, I always was , more especially since my residence in Turkey, where men, living with their necks reposing on a tightened bow-string, learn to have a wonderful reliance on the decrees of fate, or to put the same idea in my grandmother’s phrascology, everything occurs for the best. Every man, depend on it, has something to bother him. At present I am teased with my debts. But—Pshaw ! I only make a little fun of them for amusement. Praise be to our glorious Constitution !—no member of the peerage need be over-scrupulous about his character. It’s only to walk into the Queen’s Bench any day, or the Insolvent Debtor’s Court, or any of those places, and a long rigmarole of a schedule, or some other such

nonsense, pays all my debts at once, without troubling a penny. There may be some silly scruples about the proceedings, it's true; but, after all, it's a toss up which may be the best—marrying an heiress, or being white-washed—one leaves you hen-pecked for life, and the other makes you a scapegrace, but in either case or both, you have only to get your elder brothers taken off rather suddenly, by hunting, drinking, or what not; and when you duly arrive at the title, you find yourself made quite a respectable member of society again, and, ten to one, but you have a post at court given you into the bargain. Pass along the bottle, my boy!”

“Ah! Master George,” replied Pierrepoint, “right sorry should I be if sentiments like these, which you utter for the fun and the jest of the moment, were the real dictates of your heart; no man could, however, have done half the noble things that I have known to emanate from you, if

he really acted on the doctrines of unfeeling worldliness that you now propound. However, I know that you think very differently from the language that you now adopt, else I should leave you to fight your way out of your dilemmas as you best might. But, as touching my cousin, the heiress aforesaid, I think it very probable, provided the best part of her property is tied up by her trustees pretty tightly, you would make her a much kinder husband than many men who profess more, and, therefore, I will give you the introduction you wish, while, as for the rest, all the explanation which I have to give of the matter is simply this : My uncle, you know—who was also her uncle—the rich old civilian died in India, and he left the whole of his estates betwixt my cousin and myself, with this absurd and kill-joy proviso—‘that we should marry each other on our both coming of age, and that the one who refused the other should forfeit the whole of the property,

with the exception of a paltry three hundred a-year, which was left as a bare existence for the refractory party. My cousin's name is Acantha—a name as pointed and offensive as her character. I have never had courage to see her since she returned from India, where she was left an orphan many years ago. But our mutual guardian, Sir Simper Wily, informs me that she is a perfect devil, with just the frightful person I have described to you, and a temper utterly ruined by an Indian education."

"Well, though this may be lucky for me, it is unfortunate for you, certainly."

"Yes, it is most unfortunate; but I have yet to tell you of the climax of my sorrows."

"Why, what the devil's coming now? you are not in debt too, are you?"

"No, I am not in debt; you seem to regard that as the climax of misfortune; I wish that was the worst thing I had to narrate."

"Why, what's coming?"

“One of the worst calamities of human life that I know of—one, in short, that poisons every blessing on earth beside.”

“Oh Lord! you are getting sentimental, I perceive; well, what is it?”

“Oh! never mind, a matter which I perceive I was a great fool for imagining you could take a decided interest in;” said Pierrepont, evidently chagrined at the other’s raillery.”

“Come, come, my boy,” interposed his Lordship, “I beg your pardon for my ill-timed joking, but you know what a devill may-care sort of fellow I am, and though I spoke lightly, I did not mean it. What is this matter to which you alluded?”

“Why this? But were it merely a question for my own comfort, I could cheerfully give up my uncle’s fortune, every penny of it. Luckily my habits have never been expensive, and I have always contrived to save money; with what I have put by, and the trifling allowance I shall still have from

our estates, I could look cheerfully to my profession for bringing me all the wealth I ever coveted to possess, nor would ever contemplate marriage with Acantha, though she were carved in diamonds, or even made of ‘one entire and perfect chrysolite.’”

“—A rather uncomfortable sort of a wife, too! during the winter.”

“What a humbug you are, Dunvext! I suppose it would break your heart to listen quietly for three minutes to anything but yourself.”

“Well, well, go on Counsellor, you are as tetchy as a maiden aunt.”

• “Well then, you understand now, that for myself I should not have cared, but”—

“Ha, ha! I thought there was a damsel in the case; come—out with her.”

“Well, then, the truth is even so. Unfortunately, last circuit, I hardly know whether to say my evil or my happy stars led me, at the house of your sister-in-law, to make the acquaintance of one of the very

loveliest creatures you ever beheld, a penniless girl, and, therefore, I suppose the devil tempted me to fall in love with her. To be brief, the moment I beheld her, as Lady Catherine Lamb so expressively characterised her meeting with Lord Byron—

“ I felt that pale face was my fate.”

And, accordingly, in some five days' time, which seemed to pass like one continuous moment of ecstasy at her side—I was too irretrievably lost to entertain any further question of prudence—I made her an offer. She agreed to accept me, and share the hazards of my profession, and in a day or two, when Acantha comes of age, I give up, for the sake of Miss Curtis, both my fortune and my cousin. For the sake of the dear creature who has confided her happiness to my charge, I certainly feel most keenly how cruel and revolting is the will which my uncle has made, but I suppose there is no help for it. If you choose

to take Acantha and her fortune together, why I certainly shall be better pleased to know a friend benefits by my sacrifice, than that it has gone to enrich a third and indifferent party—and now you know the facts of the case. *Do you still think you will have her?*”

“Have her?—to be sure I will, and think I have the best of the bargain immeasurably. Where does the golden monster live?”

“Not far from here. She is residing at Grove Park, which is near South Shields, and the residence of our mutual guardian, Sir Simper Wily. But if you really wish to prosper in your wooing, I advise you that you must make fierce love whilst you are about it, and be ready as soon as I have refused the damsel, to run off to Gretna Green with her yourself.”

“Trust me for that; you just write me a letter of introduction.”

“Very well, as soon as the cloth is

cleared away I will do so ; and here let me take this opportunity of having a word with you as to the character of Sir Simper, for both he and his exquisite sister, Miss Circumspect, are, unless I am much deceived, as cunning as the devil, and you will find it no joke to contend against them in the progress of this affair."

"With all my heart ; the more the Hesperidean fruit is guarded the greater the fun of plucking it, and the sweeter it will taste ; and now begin with the gentlemen. What sort of a cock is old Sir Simper ?"

"Just the sort of cock who would give you hensbane and hemlock, if he thought you even had presumed to call him *old* Sir Simper. It costs him fifty pounds a-year in stay-laces.

"You need say no more now ; I know the man to a nicety."

"Why, you may have a general knowledge of the outline of his character, but as for knowing him thoroughly, depend

upon it he is too deep to be known by any one. Even I can only give you certain general guesses, which may act as feelers in the dark, as it were."

"That is very possible—but if you imagine it is long personal knowledge which reveals character, you are greatly mistaken. The moment you are personally acquainted with a man, all hopes of knowing his character are at an end. It is only the first impression which leaves you at all able to detect the true grain of old nature beneath the varnish of breeding—manner—hypocrisy, and what not, that intimacy never fails to lay over it."

"Well, well ! we are of different opinions—however, I will give you a sketch of the worthy couple, for that can do you no harm, if it does you no benefit."

"Precisely, now for the old codger."

"Well then, Sir Simper, as far as manner goes, is the complete gentleman—refined, elegant, and apparently the most delicate

mind creature it is possible to conceive. If he thought you were going to kill a snail, he would draw out his pocket handkerchief and shade his eyes. Not because he pitied the poor creature's sufferings, but simply because it was an unclean operation. In age he may be anything between the periods of thirty-five and sixty; his dress—manner—conversation, &c., &c, all point to the juvenile period, while his position in the world, together with certain forcible lines on his countenance, smack rather of the Sexagenarian. For a long time it was supposed, that he never would have moderation enough to give up his money-making position in India, where he held what is called a 'Judgeship' in the Company's service—a provincial sort of affair, I believe. However, in those days, the pagoda tree was well worth the shaking, and his elbow never tired at the exercise, till his health gave way. Again and again he strove with the utmost desperation against his maladies,

until, having been carried out of Court fainting, for the twelfth time, and reduced thereafter to death's door on a sick bed, he at last began to suspect there might be a little truth in what the medical men told him, that the next attack would most likely bring him a small quantity of chamber practice, through which he would not easily be able to see his way; that is, the grave. For this close Court he was in no hurry—so was obliged to resign; and greatly to his grief, contrived to find his way back to old England, where he is now trying to exist as a country gentleman on his private fortune. This, between ourselves, is immense—but baffled in his eastern ambitions, whatever they may have been, a mind naturally strong and vigorous, though very narrow, seems to have given way beneath the disappointment—and instead of the worship of power and place, he is obliged to concentrate on one idol, the bigotry before divided between two or three.—In short,

he adores Mammon in its worst form of money, with an intenseness and devotion truly disgusting.

“ I believe Sir Simper Wily cares more about a sixpence than either of us do about a thousand pounds; for, if we lost that sum, it might fret us for a time, but we should bend to the deprivation like any other misfortune. But if Sir Simper thought that he was sixpence short on going to bed, why, it would almost end in suicide before morning. If he could only survive till the morning, all would be right; he would comfort himself, by reflecting, that, before night fell again, he would be able to screw the amount out of some poor unfortunate devil unlucky enough to have dealings with him.

“ Still, you must not imagine, contemptible as this feeling is, that any one could have gained the post he once held in India without possessing good abilities; and, though now and then he is to be gulled, when you get on the weak side of him, yet,

he is no mean antagonist to fight, I can tell you. What his object may be in worshipping wealth so intensely, I know not. It has been asserted, that, notwithstanding his advanced period of life, he still hopes to save money enough to convert his knighthood into a baronetage, some even say a peerage. But, whether that be so or not, he draws from my cousin a large sum for her residence in his house; and, for that reason alone, will, I think, be very unwilling that she should be married to you or any third party, if he could help it. With myself, of course, the case is somewhat different; because he knows that, unfortunately, if I had the least inclination that way, no one could interfere to thwart me. But, as long as he can extort from Acantha twelve hundred a-year for her residence beneath his roof, it strikes me, that his utmost efforts will be made to keep her in a state of spinsterhood. In person, Sir Simper has a fine commanding appearance—a well-set, a well-made man

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—excellent at telling a story—and what is far more rare, and far more difficult, as well as much more prized, and far more useful, he is inimitable in listening to one.

“ This outline, with a few touches which a short acquaintance will enable you to give it, will make a pretty correct sketch of the Indian Judge, who, being fully resolved to grab every thing in his onward career, not even a knighthood would he allow to pass him.”

“ Well, if that’s your codger, I must look to my guns before I go into action. Now, having done with him, just tip me a stave about Old Mother Circumspect.”

CHAPTER V.

“ And what style of lady is your aunt?

A perfect pepper box and vinegar cruet in one.”

LANDLORD'S BILL.

“ BEFORE I begin with Old Mother Circumspect, as you have called her, there are two little ‘points, George, which I ought to add to the picture of Sir Simper—that he is a most decided flirt, and not a little bit of a saint. For some time past, he has been paying most devoted attention to your sister-in-law, Lady Sidney Dunvext. But he seems in a pleasant state of suspense, as to which shall be allowed domination over his heart—the charms of the lovely widow, for he professes great susceptibility of the fair—or his own money-bags, to which he

knows the Lady Sidney will bring nothing, *but a vast love of nick-nacks*—what is called an elegant taste—an intimate acquaintance with all the vertu-shops in London—a host of closely-written bills—and a blank check-book.”

“What call you a long pull, strong pull, and a pull altogether, Oh !”

“Precisely so. I have been watching, for some time past, with considerable amusement, the conflict in the knight’s mind; but I suspect the money-bags will have the best of it. O! how I should rejoice to see him safely and sturdily hooked by Lady Sidney!

“Why, as to that, I always leave people to manage their own affairs in any way they think fit. But I am very glad to hear what you tell me, as to his paying attention to Lady Sidney. Because, if I find him at all obstreperous on my own account, I can call him out, and shoot him on that of my sister.”

“Devilish convenient—more especially as, I believe, that, very speedily, peers, and

therefore, their sons, will be the only parties licensed to shoot at people with impunity.

However, manage all that sort of thing as you like. *One miser less in the world could do no sort of harm.* I've told you against whom you have to fight."

"Then, you may safely trust me for out-doing them, if they are as deep as the Irish channel."

"I believe it; but there is one ally who may greatly assist you."

"I'll have him. Who is he?"

"The Indian's old clerk, Fi Fa."

"Fi who?"

"Fi Fa. I see you don't understand the name. It's taken from the writ of '*feri facias*.' Soon after his birth, his father was imprisoned in a London spunging-house; and, in the midst of his distresses, his wife came to ask him—'What their last child should be called.' 'Call him—call him,' said the father—'call him Fi Fa, or Ca Sa, for I hear nothing else bawled about the

house, from morning till night.' And, accordingly, *Fi Fa* the boy was named—and a pretty 'cute specimen he is."

"A most ominous dog, *faith*!"

"Yes; but you'll find him a very useful ally, and you might easily buy him over. I suspect he hates that wretched miser, his master, and would rejoice in bettering himself."

"Then, he shall do it."

"Well, win but him, and the game is half yours. At present, I believe, Sir Simper is from home. So that you will only have Aunt Circumspect to out-general."

"Oh, as for,"—but here the reply of Lord George was cut short by a sharp tap at the door, and the entrance of Mr. Nisi—who, out of breath, had run up to say—

"Please Sir, here is Sir Simper Wily at the door, he sent me up with his compliments, and begs to know whether he can see you immediately, on most important business?"

"The devil he does," said Pierrepont,

“ tell him to call this evening, I am deeply engaged at present.”

“ Well Sir, I will if you like ; but the only objection to that is, that he is now already on the stairs.”

“ Confusion on, you Nisi ! What do you mean by letting any one come in—did not I tell you that I wanted to be alone ?”

“ Yes, Sir ; but as I did not particularly desire to have my back broken twice in one day, I thought I had better use some discretion, and let him up ;” and Master Nisi made a most profound inclination, half towards Pierrepont, and half towards Lord George, giving to both a quiet remembrance of the wrongs he had lately sustained ; and then taking himself quickly from the room, before Pierrepont could throw at his head the wine glass which he balanced doubtingly in his fingers, Nisi had made his exit, and was heard descending the stairs at full pace, not a little delighted at the dilemma into which he seemed to have

thrown the two friends, whose conversation we have been recording.

Nisi in age was about fifteen, as the reader has, perhaps, already been told. Pierrepont had taken him to oblige his father, a tenant, who, with more ambition than judgment, had thought that any appointment in London was worth two in the country. Accordingly he had allowed his son to go to that sweet mart of all the virtues—the Metropolis.

Nisi was a boy of sharp parts, and therefore it need not be added, a great lover of fun, which generally seems to accompany youthful abilities; as a matter of course, he soon contrived to imbibe from those around him, the essence of every thing that was mischievous and impertinent. Pierrepont, however, considering him more in the light of a retainer than anything else, was at pains, for this reason, to correct him occasionally. Often vowing internally that he could endure his faults no longer, still

kindly hoping that he might ultimately turn out what some people call a “useful member of society.”

As for Pierrepont himself, the reader is as able to judge of his character, at starting, as we are to describe it, except as far as anything may depend on the sense of vision. In person he was tall, but not so tall as to be awkward; his figure was slight, and like his manners, elegant; he possessed a remarkably gentleman-like and intelligent countenance, exceedingly dark, and many people said, handsome—but this is a matter so decidedly depending on taste, that we leave the question entirely to the fancy of the fair reader, who can easily imagine how far a small countenance, with very regular features of marked and varying expressions, set off by an abundance of very silky, but very black, hair, may come up to their different notions of manly comeliness. As for Lord George Dunvext, he came from a stock notorious, in the Peerage for sending

to Almack's some of the best looking men and women who ever trod those renowned boards, that have supported so much of beauty, intelligence, and that which, perhaps fascinates still more—of manner.

Lord George formed an admirable contrast to Pierrepont, being in complexion altogether as light as the Northern Circuit man was dark. He had fine large sparkling blue eyes—a noble aquiline nose—a mouth that seemed the very haunt of every dimple that fun and frolic could create—a joyous, frank, beaming look of artlessness and affection, that won for him a thousand friends, notwithstanding that he was for ever in some scrape of one kind or other, while his manners united all the careless “*bon hommie*” of the sailor, with the more refined bearing of the well-bred man. Poor Lord George! methinks he stands before me now, rattling away as I have often seen and heard him!—And yet,—but no matter—to our story.

“ Well, my boy ! this is a pretty *contre-temps*, isn’t it ?—this dropping in with Sir Simper,” said Lord George to Pierrepont.

“ Oh, no ! not at all,” replied the other. “ Stay and see him.”

“ I !—I stay and see him ! Yes, at Jericho. No, no ! this is our game. You detain Sir Simper here, at Carlisle, as long as you can, while I cut over to his house and make love to his ward, your cousin, and when once I’ve got the girl,”—here footsteps were heard in the adjoining passage, and Lord George, lowering his voice to a whisper, and snapping his finger and thumb, added—“ We will go snacks in the estate ! Hark ! here’s the infernal Indian man ; can I get out this way ?” running to a second door.

“ Yes,” replied Pierrepont ; “ that leads to my bed-room ; turn sharp round to the right.”

In an instant his Lordship darted out of one door, as the other was thrown wide open to admit the entrance of Sir Simper

Wily, who, with much formality, and no lack of bows, now entered and advanced, clothing his face in smiles. Assuming, what he intended to be, a most resistless manner, and, turning towards Pierrepont, he exclaimed—

“ Good morning, Mr. Pierrepont! I hope I have the pleasure of seeing you in very good health? ”

“ Yes, very, thank you, Sir Simper. What can I do for you? ”

“ Why, for myself, personally, I am much obliged to you for your kind offer, but Providence has beneficently left me little or nothing to desire, unless it is the delight of assuaging the sorrows of others ; a fact, though, on which I need not enlarge, since, I have no doubt, your own experience has long since brought home to your bosom, and here, perhaps,”—but at this threatened entrance on a long discussion, Pierrepont, who never could endure the other’s cant, interposed.

“Excuse me, Sir Simper, for in the least interrupting you in what you were going to say ; but I am a man of few words. I suppose you are come to ask a favour, and therefore the sooner you let me know what it is, the sooner I can grant it.”

“Oh ! thank you, my dear Mr. Pierrepont ! you are exceedingly kind.”—Not a little taken back at the other’s straight forward manner of handling the subject. “I am very sorry to trespass on your valuable time.”

“Oh ! not at all, my time is not valuable ; only, you know, I hate to listen to a long sermon for nothing, and you may as well tell me at once what I am to do, because any conversation is just as amusing as our making to each other, doldrum remarks about this, that, and the other, on subjects upon which, every one has agreed since the flood.”

“Well, well ; just as you like—you are a very funny person—very funny indeed—

I wish every one were like you—how business would be expedited in the world.”

“ Well, suppose you try to follow my example. Now, what is it you have got to say ?”

“ Why, thank you ; the subject which brought me hither is, it is true, a little matter of charity, and though I know that those who plead the cause of benevolencè have often been ill requited, still, I confess, I cannot help it ; it may be exceedingly wrong, but the sense I have of my duty compels me to prefer the odium of a beggar to the honours of a stoic, and this induces me——”

“ Well, well ! I know you are an exceedingly honest, and praiseworthy person ; but what is it you want ?”

“ Well, then, to be brief, though I feel how kind it is of you to smooth the path of my importunity—though, I may add, no one laments that importunity more than I do myself ; yet, still the practice of a life ——”

“ Yes, I’ve got all that by heart, do you see ; but what is it you want ? ”

“ Well, my dear young friend ! the case is simply this ; a poor fellow on your uncle’s estate, with a most respectable, industrious and well-disposed family, and—but lately prospering to the highest degree, has suddenly, by the calamity of a disastrous affair——”

“ Ah ! yes ; I see all about it ; you want a subscription—there—put my name down for twenty guineas. Is there anything else I can do for you ? My clerk said you came from London. I presume the object of your visit to Carlisle was something more than to get a subscription for a tenant in distress. What is it, Sir Simper ? ”

To this question the Indian made no immediate answer, but, taking out an elegant note-case, proceeded to make a memorandum of the subscription, and then somewhat theatrically resting the head of his pencil-case against his forehead, assumed an

attitude of deep thought and consideration, as if trying to recollect, muttering to himself slowly meanwhile,—

“ Let me see—I think there was something else ; what could it have been ? oh ! ah ! yes, I apprehend, it might have related to your cousin. Have you come to any resolution, Mr. Pierrepont, respecting that unfortunate — I may say that misguided young lady ? ”

“ Why, I don't know what to say ; what would you advise ? ”

“ Oh ! indeed Mr. Pierrepont, it's not for me, and in so delicate an affair as this.”

“ Well, but what would you do if you were in my position ? ”

“ Why, Mr. Pierrepont, if you put it to me thus closely, I must admit that if Heaven had blessed me with all the advantages of—ahem ! — and if, belonging as we both—I may almost say—do, to a distinguished profession, my abilities and prospects were backed up by health, which warranted me

in hoping for its wealthy honours. Nay, I will even say more, if I was conscious, as I believe we both are, of having cultivated, up from youth, a high sense of honour and delicacy ; a pure and upright mind. I must—I confess—that is—I should—say—pause.”

“ Pause ? ”

“ Yes, pause, Mr. Pierrepont ! before I allied myself to a lady who, however rich, possesses those infirmities of mind and temper inseparable from a very neglected, and, I may add, a most improper education. Consider, Sir, bred up in India, without any care or attention, and brought up as it were, in the purlicus of the camp.”

“ It is, indeed, Sir Simper, very shocking.”

“ It is, indeed, Mr. Pierrepont ; the mere fact of her squinting might be got over.”

Here a convulsive sort of shudder was seen to pass over Pierrepont’s frame, which the other seemed intensely to enjoy, as he proceeded to add—

“I cannot help believing, too, that the deformity of her spine would soon cease to offend the eye that once became accustomed to it. Nor do I even doubt, though I admit it is very horrible, but that the dreadful spectacle of the small pox would soon cease to be disagreeable, or even long noticeable to one so intimately and dearly connected as a husband. But think of the danger of selecting for your wife the creature of an Indian education!—the horror of making the mother of your children a woman who, by her father’s ill judged fondness, has been reared in a barracks!”

“For heaven’s sake, say no more, for, even at the least, think how painful a trial is before me.”

“What! you mean Sir, in marrying the lady?” here Pierrepont, shrinking back in horror, replied—

“Marry!—how could it be possible—just reflect on the being you have attempted to describe, and then say how—with such a

person, could marriage be possible? Would it not be a profanation of that sacred and endearing rite, to think it possible that any man could bring himself to form such an alliance, however great may be the advantage which it might promote? No, to marry her is out of the question. And yet into what a dilemma does the necessity of declining such a connection plunge me!

At the last paragraph of Pierrepont's reply, the utterer arose and took a sudden stride across the room, much in that sort of manner in which most men of fiery temperment are apt to indulge when particularly puzzled by any momentary embarrassment, and had any third party been able, unnoticed, to look on, he would have seen that while our hero was thus fuming at the predicament in which he was placed, Sir Simper, who was seated behind him, was taking a pinch of snuff, with quite as much glee and *sang froid*, as if his friend's perplexity afforded him an exquisite

delight. I, of course, do not mean to insinuate that such actually was the case, but merely state the fact that it appeared to be so. For some minutes Sir Simper allowed his ward to continue pacing up and down, battling his own unpleasant thoughts, and uttering every now and then a few of those left handed benedictions to which choleric people occasionally have recourse, and then at last, when he saw the storm calming, and a reasonable hope presenting itself, that what he had to say would meet with the full attention of the party to whom it was addressed, he remarked in that odious style of *non chalence*, which most people find so provoking—

“You needn’t marry her unless you like, you know. It’s only to give up your uncle’s estate, and you are a free man again.”

“Only to give up my uncle’s estate!” said Pierrepont, starting round, and replying to the suggestion in a tone that plainly showed how much he felt stung by it.”

“ You talk of another man’s resigning fourteen thousand a-year, as if it were a mere bagatelle. If you can comprehend such a thing, just try for a moment, Sir, and suppose it were your own case; and then see how you would like it.”

“ Oh ! if it were my own case ! Certainly that would be a very different matter. But I don’t know ; perhaps, after all, I should marry the girl. What is there in the small-pox, and a twisted back, and a fiery temper ? Though you are married to a person, you need not see her often, you know.”

“ At any rate,” said Pierrepont, with considerable dignity, “ marriage includes certain vows ; and, if I only gave my word to you to pursue a certain line of conduct, I would not afterwards give you an opportunity of even thinking that I had been guilty of a deliberate falsehood, much less should anything induce me to swear to my God a number of mental undertakings, every one of which, I should well know, at

the time must be a separate perjury. No, Sir Simper, I am afraid that your ideas and mine on these matters are strangely at variance; and, to marry such a being as you have described, is, for me, utterly impossible."

"Well, just as you like, only do me the justice to remember, that I have merely been persuading you to the marriage, from a feeling, that it was for your own benefit. I don't care a straw about it, whether you marry her or not. I don't want to force you."

"Of course, not."

"The only penalty that follows, as you know, is a loss of the estate. Of course, if you don't marry your cousin, you must give up all share to the property. But, as I said before, it is a thing entirely for your own guidance."

For some moments Pierrepont remained silent, endeavouring, but vainly, to conceal the annoyance under which he was labour-

ing ; at length, he turned round in his walk, and, addressing the other quickly, exclaimed, with considerable animation—

“ I think there is one course which might free us all from our embarrassments.”

“ Indeed ! It must be a very wonderful one !” drily observed Sir Simper.”

“ It is this,” pursued his ward, pretending not to notice the cold water thrown on his announced discovery—“ whatever faults my cousin Acantha may possess, I believe, it is admitted on all sides, that she does not want for ability.

“ Very possibly not, Mr. Pierrepont.”

“ Very well ! That being so, I’m sure she cannot help perceiving, with us, that my uncle has made a most absurd will ; and that it conduces no more to her happiness than it can to mine, that there should be tied up in wedlock, two people, who, in all material points necessary for such an union, are, to speak mildly, total strangers to each other, I should, therefore, think that she would

easily see the propriety and justice of our both agreeing to some proposition, like the following :—”

At this period of the conversation, Pierrepont, who was now somewhat troubled with bashfulness, and was pursuing the trick common to people afflicted with this complaint — that, of looking anywhere but at the party whom he was addressing—did not observe the lynx-eyed glance of cold determination which his words had called forth from Sir Simper Wily, who, fixed and resolute as marble, sat waiting to hear what the forthcoming proposition might be; but, at the same time, carefully abstained from helping out, with a single word, the nervous and excited youth, who was endeavouring to explain it. After changing the form of his phrase two or three times, Pierrepont at length said—

“The proposition which I consider would be a very fair one for our mutual agreement is this :—that as there exists on neither side

any predilection for each other, so both of us should abstain from attempting to take any advantage of the absurd circumstances in which we are mutually placed, but that we should draw lots which should, *pro forma*, decline the contemplated marriage, and that the party who was spared the unpleasant task should settle on the other, by deed of gift, one-half of the estate ; and, as it fortunately concerns only ourselves, there would be little or no difficulty in carrying out the scheme I propound.”

“ Why, really, Mr. Pierrepont,” said Sir Simper, elevating his brows, and looking as seriously as if he had detected some one in the act of picking his pocket ; “ the plan which you propose is one, I confess ; which has often occurred to myself, and if I have not taken steps for carrying it into effect, it is, perhaps, because I may have known too well how far any attempts to realise such a project would have been received in certain quarters ; whether I have acted wisely, or

the reverse, it is not, of course, for me to say. Neither will I give any opinion whether the really equitable, and truly high-minded, and perfectly honourable proposition which has now emanated from you, is one capable of realization; certain people may be too fond of money, or, on the other hand, they may not, that is a matter entirely for your own consideration. Unless, indeed, you should think it would be throwing time away, to make the experiment, you might sound the party yourself, and see how the proposition was received. But once more I must repeat, that it is a matter on which I shall express no opinion."

Pierrepoint on hearing these words seemed much dismayed, and after pondering for a few moments, added—

"Well, I don't think you need trouble yourself much about expressing an opinion; the man would be very dull, indeed, who could not, from what you say, gather your

conviction, that all chance of such an arrangement is hopeless."

"Really, Mr. Pierrepont, you must excuse me from giving any opinion on the matter. This fact is sufficiently notorious, namely, that you have formed an attachment elsewhere."

"Who could have told you such a thing?" exclaimed Pierrepont, in accents of surprise, not far removed from indignation.

"Excuse me, Mr. Pierrepont; I cannot give up my authority—I may be mistaken, but such is the generally received opinion. In such a matter, also, so nearly interesting herself, Miss Acantha would be sure not to be the last person informed upon the point, and it is well known that she at any rate has kept her affections disengaged, excepting so far as they are occupied in your favour. Moreover, as the chief objections to the match exist in these unlucky personalities on her side, which we have been discussing, while on your's there

are inducements just as strong," and Sir Simper gave a most flattering wave of his hand towards Pierrepont's figure, exclaiming,—

"How can you expect that any lady, placed as she is, would come into any proposition such as you have just propounded; reasonable, indeed, as I admit it to be? That is, in our view."

"Well, and why not in her's?"

"How can you ask that question? Is not the very suggestion of it an insult in itself? A lady afflicted with the blemishes we have been naming, would naturally be sensitively alive to any thing which would seem to reflect upon them, while, inconsistent as it may appear, her self-love would never permit her to imagine that they formed a barrier one-hundreth part as formidable as they really do to an union in matrimony. The very fact, therefore, of your making any proposition of the kind you name, would be evidence of your anxiety to avoid the

match, and, in plain words, be wounding her in the very tenderest point. Again, every woman who has the slightest doubt as to her being married would, for that very reason, be doubly anxious to escape spinsterhood, and the reproach that attends it. There is, therefore, little likelihood that Miss Acantha can receive with good temper a proposition, which is to tell her that you would almost rather forfeit a large fortune than marry her.—However, as I before said, I will give no opinion on the matter—you cannot hope to disguise, even from yourself, the evident fact, that she must be quite aware of the disinclination for the marriage existing on your side alone, and that any proposition of the kind you have mentioned is, in real truth, when stript of all disguise, a declaration somewhat in this form—Whereas, our mutual uncle wished that we should marry, and raise up heirs to his property; now, be it understood, that I have no hesitation in wounding your feel-

ings, by declaring to you, that you are far too odious a person for me to contemplate for a single moment the idea of marrying ; but as, by such a refusal, I forfeit all claims to my uncle's property, I have, further, no hesitation to declare in the same breath, that I shall, nevertheless, be perfectly happy to become a dependent on your bounty to the extent of half your fortune, or in other words, the small sum of seven thousand a-year."

CHAPTER VI.

“ At fifty love for love is very rare, 'tis true,
But then again, it equally as true is,
A great deal may be bought for fifty louis.”

BYRON.

PIERREPOINT winced to the very soul, as Sir Simper thus dissected the proposition our friend had made, and while the other perceived, and seemed to enjoy the annoyance he was producing, he added, with that cool wave of the hand, and careless tone on which we have before remarked,—

“ But, at the same time, understand me, Mr. Pierrepoint, this is a matter entirely for your own consideration ; I beg to offer no opinion upon it whatever. In delicate affairs of this kind, it is always better that those who are to lie upon the bed should make

it. The intermeddling of friends in such matters, I verily believe, never yet did anything but harm, however excellent might be their intentions."

"Well, perhaps, there may be something in that," replied Pierrepont, wishing, at the same time, that Sir Simper had been fifty thousand fathoms deep in the North Sea before he had ever obtained access to Pierrepont's ear, to whisper, as he had done, every sort of difficulty and annoyance ;—however, there he sat, hated and detested it . is true, but yet far from easy to get rid of, and many an objugation our hero in his mind bestowed on the Indian trustee—on his uncle—the estate—the East Indies, and all things beside. But still this did not clear up the difficulty, and what to do? how to avoid poverty on the one hand, and the squinting, crook-backed, pock-marked heiress on the other, formed a difficulty of no ordinary nature."

"Confusion take it ; it's enough to drive

a man mad to find himself in such a position at last," exclaimed Pierrepont, and, after pacing across the room, he flung himself into an easy chair, every lineament of his face betraying the dilemma in which he found himself placed.

"I'll tell you what, Sir Simper," said our hero at length, suddenly breaking silence ; "the more I reflect on it, the more convinced I am, that your last view of the case is unfortunately correct. It would, indeed, be insulting the poor girl—wrap it up in what way I might—to tell her that I would not marry her, but yet was willing to participate in her fortune ; therefore, the boldest, the most generous step is the best. I have taken my resolution. To marry her is impossible, so I will at once resign all claim on every thing, except the three hundred a-year which my uncle's will assigns to the party who shall decline to carry out its connubial folly."

"Now, the only difficulty that awaits me

is, how to convey this awkward declaration of my views. It would be too horrible to tell her, in person, that I beg to have nothing to do with her."

"Well, but can you not do so by letter? When the pen is made the instrument of unpleasant intelligence, it is always in our power to soften down the expression of our sentiments to any point that may be desirable, and in a letter you might attenuate the refusal to a point of fineness that—"

"Great as her imperfections are, would it be either wise or generous to place in her hands such a lasting record of her defects? Whatever is spoken, however bitter it may be, time gradually softens, and at length utterly destroys it; but '*litera scripta manet*,'—when we once put an annoying communication in black and white, it stands for perpetual reference."

"Well, but what are you to do?—to whom could you entrust a task at once so onerous and yet so delicate?"

“Why, if you would excuse my saying so, there could not be found any person so fit to undertake this matter as yourself. You are the mutual trustee of us both, and surely you might pass between us without any offence being given or received.”

An expression of delight seemed to twinkle in the eye of Sir Simper, as his ward said this, but it was only for an instant this natural language of the heart could have been detected. The habitual caution of the man quickly rushed to his assistance, and scarcely had there appeared the emotion we have attempted to describe, than the sparkle faded as it came, and left the countenance as cold—as black—as stern and doubtful as it was before. After seeming to consider the proposition for some little time, he replied—

“Why, really, Mr. Pierrepont, it is a matter worthy of serious debate; a letter is open to all the objections you urge, neither can it be doubted that it would be

an exceedingly trying thing for you to be exposed to declaring off at a personal interview. But again, on the other hand, I myself should hardly like to undertake such a task, more especially with a temper like her's; and again, let us put a case—suppose she will not accept a refusal from me?"

"Nay, it is no use to suppose difficulties. Will you, at any rate, undertake to try her on this point? and if she refuses to hear reason, you can let me know."

"Well, certainly, Mr. Pierrepont, since you wish it, and press it upon me in this manner, suppose I must consent to act as you desire; though I would rather you could have found some one more fitted to be the medium of such a communication. A lady for instance."

"Oh, no! I know no lady on whose service I could trespass in such an emergency, because she would necessarily have to be a friend of both parties; and I am quite cer-

tain that no person could be possibly more fitted for such a purpose than yourself."

"Well, if this really be your feeling, to oblige you I will undertake the embassy ; but if matters prove adverse, remember how I strove to avoid so dangerous an honour as you have insisted on imposing upon me."

"Thank you! — I thank you warmly," said Pierrepont, taking Sir Simper's hand, and shaking it in proof of what he felt. While Pierrepont little imagined, that if he could have looked into the heart of the man whom he was addressing, he might have seen rather a different aspect worn by Sir Simper's plans and feelings towards himself, than that which he was pleased to exhibit. How would he have started to have discovered, in the place of Sir Simper's pretended hesitation at undertaking the office of mediator, the most joyful alacrity at seizing an opportunity of mis-representation and interested intrigue? How would he have felt, could he have supposed that, notwithstand-

ing all his pretended disgust at his ward's blemishes of person, the tortuous-minded trustee was still willing to make her Lady Wily, and only anxious to secure her fortune undiminished? What would have been his opinion of his own abilities, excellent as they were, could he thus have had palpably demonstrated before him, the outrageous folly, or rather too ready confidence with which he had rushed into the very net laid to enmesh him? But this is the error to which youth is perpetually subject, and it is only when the skeleton of life is laid bare beneath its false and gaudy draperies, by the stern hand of time, that we learn the last anatomy of the human breast.

“Please, Sir, you are wanted in court directly,” said Nisi, running into the room after a premonitory tap at the door. In an instant the whole current of Pierre-point’s ideas was changed. Forgetting all about heiresses—declarations—uncle’s estates, &c., he jumped to his feet, and put-

ting on his wig with one hand, beckoned for Nisi to slip on his gown with the other.

“Quick, Nisi, get me my gown. Where is my bundle of briefs?”

“Well, Sir Simper, do you act in this matter quickly, and use your own discretion as to the manner, mode, &c. Excuse my going off in such a hurry, but you know of old, Judges are an impatient race, and don’t like waiting for junior barristers as they ought to do—a funny foible in their dispositions, which they seem to adopt with their oaths; and as we have got old Puritan down here this time in my Court, we are all on ‘our P’s and Q’s.”

“Why! I thought you had little Wittie-man.”

“No, he’s trying prisoners, and my next case is a Nisi Prius cause. Oh, Wittie-man is a prince of good fellows, may he live and die happy for the same! But as for Puritan”—

“Ah, here comes the usher, I shall

catch it presently," said Pierrepont, who saw the functionary of the court with gold lace and white wand, running straight to his lodgings, and our friend darted out of his room in the utmost precipitation; his white bands, in his haste, having got so twisted, that they seemed rather to hang over his back than down in front.

"Please, Sir, your bands are turned the wrong way," said Nisi, attempting to stop him.

"Plague take them," answered Pierrepont; "they are always the wrong way. I must alter them as I go along." And, in a few minutes, the sound of his retreating footsteps grew gradually more faint, as he hastened down stairs, and Sir Simper was left alone to his meditations.

For a few seconds after Nisi, in his retreat, had closed the door of the room in which Sir Simper sat, the latter remained, gently rocking his right foot as it was crossed upon his left knee, his whole manner

betraying the mind of one who cogitated deeply, and on a subject which did not leave him quite so much at ease as would have been altogether agreeable. Once or twice his glance seemed to wander round the room, as if to be sure that he was alone; then drawing near to him a small table, on which were set the implements of writing, he traced a few characters in figures, looked at them for some minutes attentively, and then tore up the paper on which they were inscribed, saying, as he did so—

“Truly, it is a good stake to play for; but it is a heavy game, and difficult. This conceited coxcomb, who gives himself such airs, and finally rushes blindly into my net, tempts his fate as much as man may do. But, after all, he may never behold her! — and, if I can only secure the girl in marriage, I can keep them apart well enough. Even supposing, at the worst, that he should see through his own folly and my device, if I can once gain her and her fourteen thou-

sand pounds per annum, they may safely be set against his approaches. And, in love, as in war, all's fair. Aye, that will do! I'll risk it. But how, if she should prove restive, it would be awkward, after all, to stand confessed.—No, that would hardly do, to lose my fortune, and to have my flank turned, too—but it is a danger I must meet, or at once resign the chase, and to that he has invited me, by the insane credulity with which he has placed the whole affair in my hands! No!—but for this, I might have paused! Now, Fortune herself defies me to it. Come, after all, I have made a hit, where the chances of the game were most against me.”

And, pouring out another glass of wine, the soliloquist was interrupted in his speech by a gentle tapping at the door. Having given the word, to enter, there came in a thin, meagre-looking young man, whose slender make just relieved him from the reproach of being short, and who scarcely

appeared to have enjoyed a substantial meal for some days past.

“ Ah! Fi Fa, is that you?” said Sir Simper, the frown on his brow gradually smoothing down, as he recognized in the stranger, his own familiar, who once held in his establishment a somewhat similar post to that of Nisi’s under Pierrepont.

“ Have you anything new, Fi Fa?”

“ Nothing, Sir.”

“ What brought you here, then?”

“ Your instructions, Sir.”

“ Ah! true; I forgot—I was thinking of something else. Well, Fi Fa, have you executed the orders I gave you?”

“ Yes, Sir, I wrote to those three gentlemen copies of the letters that you showed me.”

“ But, I hope, you took care to put no name?”

“ Great care, Sir.”

“ What impression did you seal them with?”

“The blank one that you generally use for that sort of correspondence.”

“And did you take care that each man got the proper letter intended for his own business, and no one elses.”

“Yes, Sir ; I took care to read them all over before I put them in their covers, so that no mistake should arise.”

“And about the handwriting?”

“Oh ! that, Sir, no one could recognise ; I took care of that.”

“And now tell me what you did when my sister, Miss Circumspect, was in town ? Did you remember my instructions to direct her attention to the door of Mr. Pierrepont’s chamber ?”

“Yes, Sir, I took care of that, and I saw her frequently watching the parties who came.”

“Well ! did every thing happen as I desired ?”

“Yes, Sir ; every thing.”

“Good! but I trust you were very discreet in the management?”

“Very Sir! Miss Circumspect will never suspect that we had any hands in it.”

“Very good, again. Now, Fi Fa, you may go. If any one requires me, I shall be found at the house of Lady Sidney Dunvext. Tell my valet to lay out my things for an evening party, and take to Mr. Jones, the bookbinder, a volume that lies on my dressing-table, Hawker’s Evening Portion.” Fi Fa made a low reverence and departed; while his master, when the door was shut, drew from his pocket a small hair-comb—arranged his locks in a looking-glass—gave a deep sigh at the ravages which time had effected—placed upon his head his hat—re-surveyed his personal exterior, with this addition—sighed once more—buttoned up his coat—sighed again—drew on his gloves—gave vent to a heavy groan—then seized his cane, as if in desperation, and departed.

CHAPTER VII.

“ But I told him I was judge in my own little Court,
And he wouldn't do for me.”

HAYNES BAYLEY.

IN an assize court, the rule of action seems to be all crush and cram! And, through the difficult *meleé*, Pierrepont, in a hurry from his chambers, as we have seen, proceeded, *vi et armis*, to force his way, until, at length, he succeeded in gaining that crowd of crowds, the bar-table—in the formation of which, it always appears to be a rule with county architects, to provide exactly that quantity of space which will suffice for one-fifth of the number who are to be accommodated.

It is now abundantly common, on the

chief circuits—which have, of course, most members—to see one learned counsel sitting in another’s pocket—the wig of a third peeping out, like a nosegay, from the button-hole of a fourth, and so on—a silk gown or a patent of precedence, at least, being the only warranty that you will not have the pleasure of being, like “the deceased,” at a “crowner’s quest,” sat upon until the verdict is delivered. Escaping from this fate, Pierrepont, as soon as he could gain his breath from the struggle, asked one or two men near him—

“Is this my case? Is this my case?”

“What is your case?” was asked in reply.

“Your case?” interrupted a third.

“The less you say about your case the better. Your case was called on, and, as you were not here, it was popped down at the bottom of the list; and, if old Puritan could have caught hold of you, spitting you upon the spear of one of the javelin-men would have been the least sanguinary mark

of his displeasure. You had better make yourself scarce as soon as possible ; he has been inconceivably crusty the whole of the afternoon, and said all sort of outrageous things on far less occasions than your keeping the Court waiting. Hark ! he's falling foul of this witness now !”

This remark drew the attention of all within hearing, to the edifying dialogue between the Bench and the witness-box.

“ Stand down, Sir ! I won't hear you,” said Mr. Justice Puritan to an enormous stout man, who stood up to give his evidence. “ Stand down, Sir ! I say, I won't hear you. You are indecent—perfectly indecent.”

“ Me, Sir ?” said the stout man, with a look of consternation. “ I've not said a word, Sir, my Lord. Indecent ! I don't understand you, Sir, my Lord !” and the unfortunate witness looked at the Judge, as if he thought one or both of them must have gone mad. But this doubt as to the

ground of his decision seemed anything but gratifying to his Lordship, who fixed on the witness a most ferocious glance his countenance being easily arranged for the expression of anger, though not pre-eminently dignified by intellect.

Truth, or scandal, assigned him royal parentage; and this, it was generally supposed, placed him upon the Bench.

As Puritan has long since gone to render, at a faultless Tribunal, an account of all his judgments here, I will not permit my widely different notions of the sacred dignity of a Judge's illustrious office, to betray me into any harsh record of his mode of administering it. His errors were those of the law and society in his day, which confounded the pretence to virtue with the possession of it, and were too little mindful, that frailty is the type of man, not less than mercy is that of God.

Many very well-meaning people, in their haste to oppose, what they call maudlin sentiment to criminals, exclaim, "that the le-

nient Judges promote crime." But, let the evidence be taken of a really clever and enlightened colonel of a regiment, captain of a ship, and master of a large household, as to whether severity or kindness is most effectual in repressing offence, and we shall learn once more, that the latter is by far the most powerful agent. Are the laws alone, then, of a great empire, to thwart a ruling principle that in all the other departments of life we cheerfully acknowledge?—But, to return—

"Witness," said Puritan, "do you pretend to tell me that you don't know what I mean, when I say that you are perfectly indecent?"

"No, Sir, my Lord ; I don't."

"Look at your whiskers, witness—look at your whiskers ; I say, Sir ! you are, Sir, perfectly indecent—look at your whiskers !"

"My Lord, you may look at my whiskers, but I can't," replied the acute witness, chasing his head, with his eyes turning round in

the witness-box, and looking most absurdly, while the audience in court were convulsed with laughter.

“Stop, fellow! stop!” cried the Judge. “Officer! Javelin man! take that witness out of court, and have his whiskers shaved off immediately.”

In an instant the javelin man sprang upon his victim—the latter in vain crying, “Sir, my Lord,” and otherwise making a last effort to save the threatened adornments of his chin. In a few seconds he was hurried down from the witness-box towards the door-way. At this instant the counsel for the plaintiff rose and addressed the Bench, saying—

“I beg your Lordship’s pardon,”—in an instant the whole proceedings were stayed; the learned gentleman who had risen was the celebrated Mr. Ginger, and who, if not exactly witty, yet was able, at will, to produce all the effects of wit, by a degree of caustic sarcasm that was, perhaps, never ex-

ceeded at the Bar. Even his countenance was a powerful weapon in his hands, to use an Irish metaphor, and his nose alone had rallied many a beaten cause. It was, to use the language of Sterne, “neither a snub nose nor a pug nose—a Grecian nose nor a Roman nose—but a deuce of a nose!” and whenever he was going to say anything that was particularly bitter, it was always proceeded by a peculiar wag or twitch, that, proboscis-like, seemed to be feeling for the sorest point of his enemy, in order to inflict his venom. The moment, therefore, he was seen to rise and extend his hand, and twitch his nose, as aforesaid, every body knew that something was coming, in all probability, to excite their merriment, and listened accordingly—“I have no doubt, my Lord,” proceeded Ginger, “that as your Lordship has ordered the witness to be shaven before he is sworn, that the cutting of his whiskers is wholly indispensable to the ends of justice, particularly as the witness has nothing

whatever to do with the case, beyond being dragged here by a subpoena to give evidence in it. Still, perhaps, I may, with great respect, inform your Lordship, that this is the only witness remaining for the plaintiff, and while you order him to the barber, the Court and Jury will have to wait."

"I can't help that, Mr. Ginger; the Court is not to blame; neither will the Court blame the counsel, if attornies are so lost to every sense of propriety, as to produce people in Court in a state of disgusting indecency."

"Of course not, my Lord," said Mr. Ginger, bowing with great respect. "I don't mean, for an instant, to question your Lordship's authority. But, my Lord, you see, a very important question arises here——" at this instant Ginger whispered to his attorney—the attorney whispered to his clerk—the clerk to the witness—and the witness back again, through the same channel—at which Ginger added—"Before this justi-

ciary operation, my Lord, is carried into effect, I am instructed to apply to your Lordship, if you should, on mature consideration, believe this proceeding absolutely indispensable, that your Lordship will order the expenses of the shaving to be made costs in the cause."

At this absurd proposition, brought out with all the gravity of which Ginger was master, and urged in his strong, northern dialect, the whole auditory burst into a roar of laughter.

"Silence! Silence! or I will clear the Court," cried Mr. Justice Puritan, getting exceedingly angry, and then replying to the counsel, "indeed, Mr. Ginger, I will grant no such application."

"I hope your Lordship will reconsider this important question," said Ginger with continued gravity, "I almost question your Lordship's power of making the witness defray the expenses of having his whiskers cut against his will. Clearly the plaintiff

is not liable to the charge ; for though the law authorizes the plaintiff to subpoena a witness, it certainly does not empower us to shave him. Again, my Lord, I apprehend my learned friends on the other side will not pay for the operation, since I am not aware that it is by them the Court is moved to shave my witness : while certainly, my Lord, it may be fairly supposed the barber will expect to be paid by some of us.” Peal upon peal of laughter shook the walls of the Court at each turn of this ridiculous argument, exposing as it did the absurdity of the order which had given rise to it. All his Lordship’s efforts to suppress the mirth seemed only to have a tendency to increase it, while every moment he grew more wrath.

“ Sit down, Mr. Ginger ! Sit down this instant ! Javelin men, take the witness out of Court—cut off his whiskers yourselves, and bring him in again. The javelin men immediately obeyed the order, and once

more the whiskered man was led towards the door.

“But, my Lord,” said Ginger, “won’t you hear?”

“No! Mr. Ginger, I will not, Sir. Sit down.”

“Well, if your Lordship will not hear the application I have to make,” — and Ginger, amid peals of laughter, in which he could scarce refrain from joining, resumed his seat. Whispering, however, in an under voice, some further joke, as it was supposed, to the attorney behind him.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ While her mother did fret, and her father did fume,
And the bridegroom stood dangling his bonnet and plume.”
SCOTT.

PURITAN saw some whispering, and apprehensive of an attempt to dispute his authority, was busy directing his attention to the plot. Fortunately for this, however, just at this moment, one of the Sheriff's people, who was taking out Don Whiskerandos the second, trod upon the tail of some cur in Court, the which cur immediately set up a terrific yelping. In a moment the attention of his Lordship was diverted from the case of the whiskers to that of the dog.

“ Take that dog into custody—take him

into custody, and out of Court directly! Javelin man take him out!" In an instant the javelin man stooped down to take up what he supposed to be the real offender, but the innate tendency of his Lordship towards justice was so strong that he interrupted him.

"No! no! no! Javelin man. Not *that little* dog, but the bigger dog with the shorter tail—I have been watching them both this half hour—the little dog knows how to behave itself very properly, very properly indeed; but it is the *big* dog that won't let her alone. Out with him, turn him out directly," and accordingly the big dog received his dismissal *instantly*. By the time that this important operation was completed, Ginger's device had had ^{*}time to produce its due effects, and after a moment or two of pause, during which the auditory were expecting to see the indecent witness make his appearance, all shaven and shorn—the javelin man presently came

in with considerable trepidation in his looks, and the following important message.

“ Please my Lord, the fat witness sent me in to beg your Lordship will have compassion on his wife.”

“ His wife ! what is the matter with his wife ?”

“ He says, my Lord, that his wife is very near her confinement, and that she has taken a particular fancy, my Lord, that her husband should wear long whiskers ; and, if your Lordship insists on having them shaved off, he is afraid, my Lord, that, when he goes home, it will cause his wife to miscarry.”

Now, it was known to be either a virtue, or an affected one, on the part of the learned Puritan, that he had a great feeling for the fair sex ; and though, in every thing else, as immoveable as his supposed descent entitled him to be, he was, in this particular matter, as easily led as any one could well desire. This story, therefore, of the wife, and her

longing, &c., was an uncommonly well devised fiction, which could not fail to hit him on the tender point, as Ginger well knew.

“ Oh ! his wife !—hem—aha—well, certainly, there is some extenuation in that. Ladies do sometimes entertain most extraordinary predilections. I only wish, that, when witness’ wife took to longing, she had taken a liking to any thing else but a pair of bristly whiskers. However, such being the case, the witness may be sworn.”

The chuckle, on the part of Ginger, was great at his triumph ; and, in a few minutes, Don Whiskerandos entered the box, and gave the long contemplated evidence.

As soon as this farce was concluded, Pierrepont looked round the Court, to see if he could recognize any other subject of amusement, to wile away the time ; and, as his glances turned towards the Bench, his attention was attracted by two ladies, sitting near the Judge, and who seemed to enjoy amazingly the eccentricities his Lordship’s

conduct exhibited. This might have been exceedingly wrong, but it was also so exceedingly natural, that I cannot, in my heart, condemn it.

“Surely,” said Pierrepont, “I know that face.”

“And it seems to know you,” said some wag, who had been sitting sufficiently near him, to hear him addressing himself.

“Does she?” continued Pierrepont, looking again.

“No, no!” replied the wag, “she doesn’t—I was only joking.”

“Joking, or not joking,” muttered Pierrepont, who was by no means fond of these practical amusements, “I perceive they are no other than Lady Sidney Dunvext and Miss Curtis.”

Now, in reality, Miss Curtis was the very identical fair, but portionless beauty, who, by entrancing Pierrepont with her charms, had paved the way for his rejection of the heiress. No sooner, therefore, did he catch

a glimpse of her bright eyes, than all other things became forgotten ; and, throwing down his bundle of briefs before the nearest barrister, to take charge of them, he began to press his way out of Court, in order to get an opportunity of speaking to her. Just at this moment, however, Lady Dunvext and her companion rose and retired; and, notwithstanding all our hero's efforts to attract their notice he failed; but had the mortification of seeing them go out of Court. Still, as Pierrepont concluded that he should easily meet them in the lobby, he hurried on.

CHAPTER IX.

“ Vengeance shall fall on thy disdayne,
That makest but game on earnest payne.”

VISCOUNT ROCHEFORD.

It is now time, in the due course of our narrative, to say a few words descriptive of our heroine, Miss Curtis. We have already, to a certain degree, heard from the lips of our hero, Pierrepont, who and what she was, namely, the portionless orphan of some deceased gallant officer in the army, who had been unable to save sufficient from his scanty half-pay to leave any endowment for his only child. That such should be the unhappy lot of either father or daughter is deeply to be regretted; but we fear it happens in this over populated island in a pro-

portion of at least eight cases out of ten ; and since, in this world, misery must be endured in some quarter, surely one would think it wiser that the sorrow should fall on the parent, condemning him to a life of celibacy, however painful, rather than he should risk bequeathing to a child, and that child possibly a girl, the bitter heritage of poverty and dependence. However, love is a sad upsetter of arguments, and when once that madness gets into young people's heads, or hearts, or wherever it takes its refuge, it is rather difficult to preach prudence with any effect.

Thus, it appears, Miss Curtis had been staying on a visit with Lady Sidney Dunvext, during the spring assizes, which preceded those of which we are at present writing, namely, the summer ; and chancing at the first to meet our friend Pierrepont, he there, to use his own expression, "fell heels over head in love" with the lady ; and, impetuous in all his actions, at once ventured

“the question” that was to produce so material an effect on his future life.

This grand point once decided, it may readily be supposed that all further halting was with him beyond debate. It was now too late to look back, even if he wished it; and lover-like, therefore, he gave himself up to the delight, which his imprudence, if imprudence it was to be termed, had insured for him. But, here, however, it will be more to my reader's amusement to take him into a degree of confidence not yet enjoyed by our friend Pierrepont, who had still to learn that his adorable penniless beauty, Miss Curtis, was one and the same person with the hideous deformed hump-back heiress and his cousin Acantha. In other words, the lady, with infinitely more wit than the gentleman, had shown herself determined, before she accepted or rejected the marriage propounded by her uncle, to see her compulsory suitor unknown to himself: her friend, Lady Sidney Dunvext, readily em-

braced and forwarded her plot, and thus, under the fictitious character of Miss Curtis, the warm-hearted and enthusiastic, but clever girl, enjoyed the transport of winning for herself alone that affection which she feared Pierrepont might otherwise have manifested, from the force of his position. With this explanation I shall proceed, calling the pretty conspirator, Miss Curtis or Acantha indifferently ; as for Pierrepont, I have already hinted, that his disgust at losing sight of his fair friends was excessive. “ Surely,” thought he, “ they must have seen me—they never can have been so unobservant as not to have noticed that I was in court ;” and then there rushed to his recollection the possibility of the wig having so disguised him, that they did not recognise his features—a matter of no unfrequent occurrence. This thought assuaged his wounded vanity, and he then looked into the other Court ; but the usher speedily relieved him from any notion of their having

passed to that side : another of the javelin men, having heard his enquiries, informed him that two ladies, very much of the appearance he mentioned, had just driven off in their carriage. Driven off! and without seeing him—the thing was quite impossible. What agony the bare thought occasioned! This was the first ruffle that had ever passed across the brilliant surface of his attachment ; and ah, with what keenness did the first suggestion of doubt find its way into his soul ! Could it be possible that they had seen and avoided him ?

If he had ever questioned the reality of of his passion, those few moments would have solved the point for ever. At any rate, thought he, I will reduce the matter to a certainty ; and, rushing quickly to the entrance of the Assize Court, he was just in time to catch a glimpse of Lady Sidney's liveries, as the carriage whirled round the corner of the street ; and, as if this was not sufficient, there was the ostrich plume which

he had seen Miss Curtis, a few moments since, wearing on the bench. Between conjecture and surprise, he remained speechless; so much so, that I leave my learned friends to gather the extent of his absorption from the following fact, the authenticity of which is vouched for by four eye-witnesses :—

That noted attorney, Waddle, who is supposed to have registered a vow—but certainly *not* in Heaven—to pay his counsel's fees on the first day of the Greek kalends, came up to Pierrepont with a brief, at the moment he was gazing after the Dunvext carriage: by a sort of animal instinct, without any notion of what he was doing, any further, than that which animates the hand of every gentleman in a wig and gown, making it curl mechanically upon any piece of foolscap tied with red tape, much in the same manner that the mimosa plant exhibits its sensitiveness to the human touch—Pierrepont took the brief aforesaid.

“I shall send my clerk to you,” said the attorney, “with the fee, in a few minutes, Sir.”

“Nothing more, I thank you, Sir—I had rather not,” was the reply of Pierrepont, so distinctly uttered, that Mr. Waddle, although opening his eyes very wide, deemed it quite unnecessary to ask for any explanation, but, replying simply by a low bow, was rapidly making off, quite content that things should remain as they were; and so they undoubtedly would have remained, but for the interposition of one of Pierrepont’s acquaintance, who, seeing that he was in a dream—latterly no very rare matter—woke him to a sense of his present situation by a tap on the elbow, and a word of explanation, that at once conveyed to our hero’s mind a proper cognizance of the folly of which he had been guilty, and enabled him to repair it, by returning the aforesaid piece of paper to the custody of Mr. Waddle, who had to retrace several yards to receive it, and was then informed, that he could pay

the fees at whatever time he pleased, but that he would also be pleased to retain his papers until the same time.

“Oh! very well, Sir!” replied the unabashed Waddle. “I thought you were labouring under some mistake.” And, putting his hand in his pocket, he immediately produced the fee in question, without allowing it to stand over to the period of the Greek kalends aforesaid—a day which, for such purposes, every son of learning has universally decided to be not in “Term.”

Hurrying quickly to his lodgings, that he might there, unobserved, give vent to the feeling that oppressed him, Pierrepont, on going into the sitting-room, paced fiercely to and fro, revolving in his mind the various possibilities of the incident that had just occurred.

“It cannot!—It cannot, surely, have been intentional—their going off thus, first from one Court, and then from the other. What can I have done? Surely she could never

have taken offence at some imagined trifle ; and yet what other explanation is there for such extraordinary conduct ? When did I hear from her ? Why, it was but yesterday morning. No !—now I think of it, I remember, the post brought me no letter, much to my annoyance. Where is the last ?—let me see—ah ! here it is. Yes, the date was the day before yesterday. Nothing like offence can be traced in this ; and, she has, with this exception, written to me by every post, because she knows how much I prize her letters. Yes, surely—and yet, now I think of it, once or twice I thought there was an intentional averting of the eye from where I stood ; but it cannot be ! I have often heard with what heedless torments lovers afflict themselves ; and this must clearly be a case in point. I'll think of it no more. It must—it shall be, some mistake, which the first interview will set right." And, as if determined to make no misery for himself, he pressed the fair

handwriting to his lips ; and, going to his desk, took from thence a small, but exquisite, portrait, and began minutely to scan over each individual and much-prized feature. — “ How beautiful she looks ! — It would, indeed, be perfect desecration to imagine so exquisite a creature could be capable of giving heedless and undeserved pain to human being, much less to one who, by his own confession, loved her ; and, that I have given her no occasion, I am certain. Those mild and exquisite, but somewhat pensive, eyes, never yet shone beneath the forehead of a coquette ! And what a mouth, too ! exquisitely soft and feminine as it is — what promise it unfolds of reasonable firmness ! No ! — that brow warrants too good an intellect to make idle quarrel on insufficient ground ; and I will follow her example. And yet, what an hour or two of intense delight have I not missed by failing to catch her eye ! It’s just exactly like the perpetual ill-fortune that attends me ! To

think of having once been made the heir to such a splendid property as my uncle left!—and then—!—without the least fault of my own, to have it taken from me—for it amounts to that as nearly as any thing can. Most men would have gone mad beneath such a calamity. However, if it is to be borne, it had better be borne with calmness. Though no longer able to enjoy the luxuries of wealth without fagging for them—and, what is a still harder deprivation, though no longer blest with the power of assisting others less fortunate than myself, we may still experience much real happiness on our slender means. Perhaps, after all, we may even be the happier for having to strive for those enjoyments we value, I have often suspected, that wealth unsweetened by labour, and unenhanced by a knowledge of its want, is, after all, but a poor and sickly substitute for the vigorous delight of those who can trace their enjoyments back to their own industry. However, though it doesn't

seem the most precise practice of my own doctrine; yet, for to-day, at any rate, I'll give myself a holiday. Lady Dunvext's villa is within an easy ride; and what occupation on earth can be more delightful, with such a sun, than to canter gently along, dreaming of Emily's blue eyes. Yes, I will just go in, and ascertain that this infernal cause isn't likely to come on to-day, and, that safe, I will ride over, and dine with Lady Sidney."

Scarcely had these words issued from our hero's lips when once more Nisi came hurriedly into the room with a new version of the same old story.

"Please, Sir, your case is called on, and the Court is waiting for you."

"Confusion!" said Pierrepont; "why, I thought just now it was down at the bottom of the list. Old Puritan seems to be the impersonation of the spirit of annoyance; but some men do appear to consider it necessary, if they have a public duty to

perform, to discharge it in such a manner as shall prove a perfect annoyance to every one around them. Confusion take the brief! I suppose I must attend to it. But yesterday, if it had interfered with but the smoking of a cigar, I should have pitched it to the devil. Now, ‘*tempora mutantur*,’ I must look to my profession as a source of profit—and—oh! bitter word—of bread. Well, then, here goes—as Nelson would have said, to Westminster Abbey or Westminster Hall;” and, with a sort of heroic flourish of the hand, Pierrepont hurried off to the Courts.

Few things in the events of a rich man’s life are calculated to act as a greater blessing to him than some slight acquaintance, in his own person, with at least the fears, if not the actual woes, of poverty. It is only by this style of estimating the real worth of money, that its possessors can ever form a true judgment, not only as to the amount of the blessings entrusted to their keeping, but also as to the actual sufferings of those

of their fellow-creatures who have been less fortunately placed in life. Thus we see that Pierrepont, even at a distance from that gaunt spectre, poverty, could already feel its chilling breath ; and if now, while yet as much in the possession of his uncle's estate as he had ever been, he knew, as we have seen, the hardship of resigning it, and the annoyance of dependence even on a profession proverbially the most independent of all, we can imagine how those feelings would have been augmented and deepened, when the careless youth had grown into the provident and anxious man—when the freshness of life's flower had ceased, its beauty began to fly, and the bloom to wither on the stem. Then, perhaps, when some three or four more human beings had entered into life, with all its dread responsibilities and heart-breaking trials, when he should begin to feel that each little being that he had called into existence must not only look to him for sustenance, together with the

mother that bore them, but must depend on his exertions for the knowledge that must fit them for their struggle here, and confirm or blast their happiness hereafter : and, when these serious questions came to be perpetually presented to his view, how would he then feel if the world went wrong against him?—his abilities prove less commanding than his own wishes had anticipated—or, even granting his success—if a casual fit of illness should expose to the horrors of want these numerous and tender dependants on his labours ? Until this crisis in the life of a professional man is realised, he never knows the real amount of the responsibility of his undertaking marriage.

While, however, unconscious of a threatening future, Pierrepont is busy working in Court, let us direct our course towards the dwelling of Lady Dunvext, and see whether, in reality, there was the least ground for the suspicion which Pierrepont entertained of some offence having been

taken by his lady-love. When Lady Sidney's carriage drove back to her door, the eyes of the unmarried damsel were red with weeping—that looked very suspicious, certainly. Hastily throwing her veil over her countenance, that the servants might not detect these betrayers of weakness, Miss Curtis hurriedly stepped into the hall and rushed to her own room. Here, throwing herself on her couch, she indulged in that useful remedy for excited spirits, a flood of tears; while even that generally privileged person, her lady's maid, was sent away, and for some time the briny pearls unrestrainedly followed fast upon each other. After a lapse of something like twenty minutes, a slight tap was heard at the door, on which the mourner having risen and hastily bathed her temples, gave admittance to her hostess, Lady Sidney Dunvext.

CHAPTER X.

‘Passe forth my wonted cryes,
Those cruel eârs to perce.’

SIR THOMAS WYATT.

“WELL, my dear child,” said her Ladyship, “I guessed how you were amusing yourself, and well knowing what a relief it is, and what benefit to enjoy the luxury of a good lachrymation, I would not interrupt you; but now it’s over, and you are better able to attend to what I have to say to you, just tell me, candidly, don’t you think you are a very silly person?”

“Oh! Lady Sidney,” sobbed the orphan, “how can you, knowing what I do,—how can you blame me?”

“Why, my dear girl, I blame you for

your want of resolution. You receive certain anonymous letters, all telling you that your lover is a worthless and dissolute person, whom you ought by no means to marry."

"Well!" sobbed the other, "and is there not too much reason to believe so?"

"Why," said Lady Sidney, coolly, "that's as parties may happen to think. - I confess, for my part, I should not on such evidence as you have obtained, discharge a poodle."

"Yes, but my dear friend, you never knew what it was to be devoted to one being, whom it was your delight to esteem superior to all mankind."

"No, my dear, I never was so silly as that, though I admit, that I have been very foolish in my time, and those who expect impossibilities, must realise disappointment. If you ever want to reap sorrow, that's the exact seed to plant. Now you see, the ill-natured weed grows with sufficient plenty in my garden, and I do not trouble myself much with its cultivation."

“ Pray, pray, do not jest with me, dear Lady Sidney ; right, or wrong, if you knew the misery I suffer, you would admit I cannot bear it.”

“ Well, well, my good child, I wont jest with you, if that increases your annoyance ; but just listen for a few seconds to a plain statement of your case. You receive these anonymous letters inculcating Mr. Pierrepoint, and after a long discussion as to the probability of their charges, you agree to seek him. You find him in the course of a few minutes drive ; he is rushing to meet you, and you insist on my immediately driving you out of the way. Now, answer me, is that acting like a sensible person, or is it conduct, which, if you saw it in another, you would even for an instant approve ?”

“ I cannot help it,” sobbed Miss Curtis,
“ I would rather have died, than have met him in that crowded court.”

“ Then why did you go ?”

“ Because, until I was there, I felt I could never be happy, until I heard what explanation he had to offer, as to these charges.”

“ Then what has occurred to change your feeling on that point ? ”

“ Nothing has occurred.”

“ Why don't you seek an explanation then ? ”

“ I would give the world for it,” exclaimed Miss Curtis, scarcely able all the while to make herself intelligible, “ but every time the interview seemed on the point of being accomplished, an indescribable dread came over me, which seemed to render death almost preferable.”

“ Well ! but if this be so, what in the name of fortune is to be done ? ”

“ I know not.”

“ Well, then, I do,” said Lady Sidney, “ which is, sooner than let you trifle with his happiness and your own, I will myself enclose the letters to Pierrepont, and ask

him to give me some explanation regarding them."

"Oh, not for worlds!" and Miss Curtis seemed more wretched by this proposition, than she had been before.

"Alas!" said Lady Dunvext, with a sigh, "if this is what your true sentimental school call love, I thank heaven I never knew what it is; it would bore me to death in a very short time. Will you take my advice in this matter? It is simply this: treat as nonentities these anonymous letters, and give yourself time to ascertain from other sources, whether there is any word of truth in the whole tissue of them. If, as I suspect, they are written by some mercenary intriguer, who is anxious to make suit to you himself, time will fully develope the fraud, thus basely employed to disturb your peace. While, should this really be the character of young Pierrepont, you cannot fail, through some channel or other, to gain intelligence of

the fact; and, until you are satisfied on that point, you need not commit your happiness by any irrevocable step; so that either way, you have only to check the impetuosity that marks your character, to make sure of your own happiness."

"Yes, but you do not think, in the meanwhile, how this suspicion will cloud with distrust, every moment of our intimacy, which hitherto, has been productive of so much happiness."

"Well done! there spoke the young-Lady-in-love; of course nothing else can content you, like all the rest of the world, than having everything you wish at once. You wish to enjoy all the delight of unsuspecting attachment; and yet, to the very being who holds your heart in this ecstatic vassalage, you refuse even the slight portion of your confidence, which would be necessary to the belief, that he is wholly incapable of conduct like that which is here imputed to him!"

“Indeed, Lady Dunvext,” said Acantha, covering her beautiful face with her long and taper fingers, while sorrow’s beads still stole slowly through them, “I know I deserve your reproach, every word of it; while I feel that I am also wholly unable to pursue that line of conduct which you suggest, and which would, indeed, be more consonant to the exercise of anything like reason. Why, oh! why, was woman ever doomed to be the victim of so dreadful a tyranny as love? Bitterly, indeed, do we pay for its delights in every shape and form.”

“Well, my dear, as to that, you must know I do not think, we have any more cause to complain than the other animal, who has nicknamed himself Lord of Creation. Suppose now, instead of thus selfishly dwelling on your own woes in this behalf, you had placed yourself in Pierrepont’s case, when you went out of Court, and left him to seek you, like one of the lost ‘Pleiades seen

no more below !' Does'nt it strike you that he might then, with more justice, have bewailed his fate, in having so coquettish a mistress, and in a similar strain to that which you are now indulging, might he not have used your very words, and yet have had far less ground for blaming himself than I suspect you have at this moment ? Did you never receive an anonymous letter before ?”

“ Never, and I hope I never shall again.”

“ Most cordially I say amen ; but I suppose there are few in life, who have not had some officious, interposing wretch to mar their peace, and under the pretence of having nothing at heart but the good of their unfortunate victim. When you have been as well seasoned to this kind of torture as myself, you will learn to give as much weight to an anonymous letter, as the air gives to a feather ; namely, to drive it before you without thought or consideration. Just reflect, if an anonymous

letter were to form a sufficient basis for accusation, what virtue could be safe ? The first designing knave, who may have been thwarted in some plan of villainy, has only to put pen to paper, and Brutus himself, may be no more an honourable man. The very case with which character may be thus annihilated, renders it imperative, that even truth itself should be scouted, if it comes through the channel of an anonymous letter. If, indeed, the party accused had notice of the accusation, and thus the means of making his defence, it might then be safe to listen to such communications, and useful to receive them. Till then—take my advice—treat them all as so much waste paper. Be on your guard, if you like, but nothing more. And now——” But what was further to follow was left for ever unexplained ; a terrific peal of knocking and ringing was heard at the front-door, at which Lord George was now seeking an entrance, having missed his way only twice.

The sound, to Lady Sidney, at that time expecting no one, acted as an instantaneous arrest of any further conversation. until the servant came up to announce his Lordship's name.

CHAPTER XI.

“ Faint amonist ! What ! dost thou think
To taste Love’s honey, and not drink
One dram of gall ? A lover’s mind
Must use to sail with every wind ! ”

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY.

“ LORD George ! ” said his sister, “ what can have brought him down from town at this particular moment ? Come, Acantha, nothing could be more opportune for you ! here is one of Pierrepont’s most particular cronies. He and the bottle will be sure to form a lasting friendship at dinner ; and, then, if there is the least foundation for these accusations against your faithful swain, we shall be able to have it all out. Only remember, you must not expect any man to prove an angel ; and, if it should appear that your inamorato, like most young men,

has been reaping a few of his wild oats, as well as sowing them, don't blame me for having been the means of letting that odious animal, the cat, out of the bag; though, by the way, I really don't see, if every charge in the anonymous letters were proved against him, it could make any material difference in the matter, except as to the gambling part of the story; and it certainly is awkward to see your husband leave his house at night an independent man, and return home in the morning a beggar. But these '*contre temps*' can always be avoided by a settlement; and, for the rest, if you will believe me, they amount to mere bagatelles."

"What! Lady Sidney, is it possible you can speak thus lightly of such serious matters as are here laid to his charge?" and Acantha took from her bosom the wet, and blotted, and crumpled letters, that had given her such uneasiness.

"Charge!—Why, I remember no charge worth thinking of!"

“How can you speak in so inconsiderate a manner,” said Miss Curtis, “when such evidences of dissolute folly are placed before you?”

“What! is it possible you can allude to the absurd statement of a mistress?”

“Is not that sufficiently vile?” cried Miss Curtis, throwing down the letter with a fresh burst of grief. “But that there should be added to it the fact of his having a family in that quarter!”

“Oh! that may or may not be the case; and, after all, does it matter a straw what occurred before you were his wife? He sucked his coral, and bit his nurse, and committed all sorts of silly tricks in his day, no doubt, as all children will. So also the matter to which you allude, though exceedingly immoral and very improper, is, nevertheless, established, by the general weakness of mankind, as one of those transgressions which ought not to be visited too harshly, if no treachery or falsehood has been mixed up

with it; and thus, if you are a wise woman, you, too, will regard it. Young girls often complain, that widows are more winning in society, and succeed better with men, than themselves. The simple truth lies in this—young girls are always expecting their swains to be angels in disguise, while women who know the world, think themselves too fortunate to find their adorers tolerably good-tempered and honourable men; to whom, as every license is permitted, some folly must be allowed. To poor Woman, however, (though very properly, I admit,) no such license can be extended. However much, therefore, we may condemn the other sex at large, we, in return, should make every allowance for individual failings, when we remember how doubly difficult it is to have the opportunity of indulgence, and yet to refrain. But come, I will go down to my brother-in-law, and make our apologies, while you bathe your eyes and arrange your toilet. George is the

very rattle best suited to amuse us under our present doldrums, and I really feel quite grateful to the chance that has brought him among us. Don't be longer than you can help." And, waving her hand to her friend, the gay, but excellent-hearted widow, glided down stairs to that inimitable and sober young man, whose irruption on Pierrepont we lately witnessed.

When Lady Sidney arrived at the drawing-room, she found that her brother-in-law, impatient as usual of delay, had walked through the conservatory into the garden, thinking that when tired of this sort of divertissement he might return again. Lady Sidney, however, who prided herself on never seeking any one, took her needle and sat down until it should please his Lordship to retrace his steps. Amused, however, with his own thoughts, and occupied in observing what alterations in taste his relation had effected in the elegant domain that called her mistress, since he was there

last, he wandered on until there struck upon his ear the sound of Lady Sidney's very early dinner bell; for she actually had the courage in summer to dine at four o'clock, in order to enjoy that delicious thing an evening ride, after the meal was over.

Warned by the summons, Lord George returned to the drawing-room, where Miss Curtis, having effaced the traces of her agitation, was now deep in all the mysteries of Berlin wool, thinking no more, by the way, of the roses and pansies she was embroidering, than of the Emperor of China. The riding-whip which he had used on his journey—because, as a matter of course, he had borrowed Pierrepont's horse without asking for it—was still swinging in his hand to and fro, the gold head knocking against each door and cornice with as much carelessness as if it had been paid for, and humming as he walked along the following elegant and bashful ditty—

SONG.

"I care not a jot,
What the world says or not,
If it likes or upbraids my pursuings;
It will ne'er pay my scot,
It can blow cold and hot,
So I'll follow my will in my wooings.
Who says nay? who says nay?
So I'll follow my will in my doings.

Its praise or its blame,
Is a trumpery name,
Withheld or bestowed with slight reason;
With itself on good terms,
'Tis a mere nest of worins,
All rotten and dead in a season;
Who says nay? who says nay?
All rotten and dead in a season.

Then give me the bottle, Old Bacchus!
Bring Venus to supper to-night,
And every dull sorrow
We'll leave till the morrow,
Shall bring us fresh cares with the light.
Who says nay? who says nay?
Shall bring us fresh cares with the light.

Fresh cares did I cry?
Father Care I defy,
Thy grim visaged-jowl and thy minions,
While a woman's on earth,
You may swear there is mirth,
For me in each monarch's dominions!
Who says nay? who says nay?
For me in each monarch's dominions!

I have cheer'd at old Death,
Where the cannon's hot breath,
Parch'd wondrously dry my young throttle;
And when all the fun,
Was done and we'd won,
I toasted my lass in a bottle.
Who says nay? who says nay?
I will toast my lass in a bottle.

So the battle of life,
I'll fight through the strife,
Beneath the best flag that e'er won it;
While a petticoat still
Can be found, I will fill,
My bumper in hopes to die on it!
Who says nay? who says nay?
My bumper in hopes to die on it!

Just as the last line of this very retiring song had ended, Lord George gained the conservatory door, and the first thing that struck his sight was the figure of Miss Curtis working away at one—two—three—four—black, &c.

“By Jove! what a splendid creature!” involuntarily burst from the lips of his Lordship, to whom I feel bound to render the justice of declaring, that this exclamation was no rude vulgar trick, intended

to curry favour at the hands of a lady whom he chanced to admire, but the genuine and irrepressible delight of a man wholly off his guard, never dreaming that he was uttering his thoughts, and in every sense of the word literally taken by surprise. Miss Curtis and his sister both turned at the sound of Lord George's voice, and then, for the first time, he became aware how greatly he had committed himself, and recovering his pace, which had come to a dead halt as he uttered the exclamation, he removed his hat from his head, saying, as he bowed to Miss Curtis—

“ I beg pardon for my unintentional rudeness, I was unaware that I uttered my thoughts aloud ;” and, going up to Lady Sidney, claimed and received the privilege of a salute, from lips that any man might have envied him the right of pressing.

“ Why, my dear George!” exclaimed Lady Dunvext, “ to what kind fate are we indebted for having you here ?”

“ My dear sister, a special interposition of the fates in your favour, and this, I beg it to be understood by all my friends, is always the case, when they behold the illustrious individual who now stands before you. But, first of all, introduce me to your charming companion, and I will tell you all about every thing.”

“ Generous creature!” exclaimed Lady Sidney, in the same tone of badinage, “ one can never sufficiently thank you. My charming companion is Miss Curtis, whom,” added Lady Dunvext — for she thought it was politic, notwithstanding her friend’s heroical determination to hear the worst, to give a delicate warning to Master George, as to what he said before a person so interested as Miss Curtis ;—“ whom you may often have heard mentioned by your friend Mr. Pierrepoint.”

“ To be sure I have, and thrice delighted, both on account of Miss Curtis, and the learned Counsellor, am I to meet a lady in

whom, if she will allow me to say so, I already take so warm an interest. Permit me, Miss Curtis, to anticipate the moment when we shall become friends of a most intimate degree," and the gallant George held out his hand with all the frankness that marked his character.

"Friends of an intimate degree, my Lord? Well, I hardly know what to say to that," replied Miss Curtis, who had partly regained, in the presence of the stranger, those high spirits that usually characterised her proceedings.

"Not know what to say?" echoed Lord George, repeating what he would have termed a wicked speech—he, imagining, of course, that in the unfriended orphan, he should be sure to meet one of the retired—bashful and speechless young maidens, who are generally as faultless in breeding, as they are direful in conversation.—
"Not know what to say to my having the privilege of being some day your friend?"

Why, what should make you doubt it, Miss Curtis?"

"Ah! there shone the curiosity of your sex, my Lord; to forbid us even to express an opinion, without exposing to you the grounds on which we formed it. Do you really wish to know, now, why, I fear, we shall never be good friends?"

"Yes, I do; and if I am curious, at any rate I am above the folly of disguising it."

"Well, I warn you, that if you insist on asking me, I shall tell you the real truth."

"Well, that's exactly what I wish to hear."

"Then you are the only man, I believe, who ever sought such information since the days of Adam."

"Fie! fie! what a satirist! but, however, pray tell me, for I burn to hear it."

"I suspect, when I do tell it you, you will feel yourself to be vastly like the moth, that will get into the light until its wings

are fairly consumed. You will be violently offended if I do tell you, and the end of it will be, that there our friendship will terminate at once,”

“ Well, I swear, our friendship shall not end at once, whatever you tell me ; come, what is the reason ? ”

“ Oh ! after all, not much, nothing very material— when I first hesitated as to our ever being friends of an intimate degree, I simply thought you too much of a fop— perhaps it was very rude to do so—perhaps, also, I may already be beginning to change my mind, and that, you know, is a woman’s privilege.”

“ What, Miss Curtis ! defend me ! what a wondrous mistake to make ! A fop—no person could imagine such a thing.”

“ *Now* I know that you are a fop, because you won’t admit it—it’s the most foppish thing in the world for a man to deny his faults unless he is going to play the part

of perfection, and for that I suppose even you will not presume to set up."

"Pray, may I ask, do you attack Pierrepont in this way? for, if so, he must look forward to a nice life of it."

Lord George was the farthest thing in the world from ill-nature, and so far from disliking to be told of his faults, he felt such a treatment at the hands of a pretty woman, as most men do, the highest compliment that could be paid him. But had he wished at the utmost, either to torment his mistress, or to check her quizzing, he could not by any possibility have had recourse to any more decided method of doing so, than that to which he had inadvertently resorted. Scarcely had the words passed his lips, when the lady's neck and shoulders tinted like an evening sky before an October sun, and then again, after a few moments, a deadly pallor succeeded to the crimson hue, and then the flush came on again, while she appeared, under his lordship's severe scrutiny,

to be undergoing no slight torment. At last, turning the conversation completely away from the subject, she exclaimed, in a tone of borrowed carelessness—

“Will it rain this evening, my Lord?—may I ask you as a gallant son of Neptune?”

“How did you know I was a son of Neptune?”

“What! is your curiosity roused once more! Insatiable mortal, and have you forgotten that all your misdeeds are recorded in *Debrett*, or is it a piece of modesty that you assume, to be so utterly unknown?”

“Well, well! I see that you and my sister have ere this been so condescending as to discuss the demerits of your humble servant, and though I have detected you in the treason, I am munificent enough to forgive it.”

“Generous creature! munificence personified.”

“Come, come, good people,” said Lady Dunvext, at the other end of the room,

“for parties that were not going to condescend, even to one another’s friendship, you seem to be progressing at a most lively pace into one of the most decided flirtations I have witnessed for some time ; I am sorry to interrupt the bewitching amusement, but just allow me to inform you that the dinner bell has rung, and that I must attend to its summons ; George, don’t forget absent friends you know.”

“ Not for worlds, dearest ; there, go and dress, I know you are in a fever to be putting on pointe and cachmere,” but this sally was lost on the party to whom it was addressed, who was already out of hearing before it was half uttered ; Lord George followed his sister with his eye to the doorway, but when he saw her depart, he then looked round for the beautiful being at his side, when he found, to his mortification, that she too had fled, he being just in time to get a sight of the last flutter of her dress as it vanished before the drawing-room

window on the terrace, upon which, in the French style, it opened. “By Jove they are both gone, so as following women’s steps has been the occupation of my life, I needs must after them.”

CHAPTER XII.

“ Marigold is for marriage,
Penny-royal is to print your loves.”

HANDFUL OF PLEASANT DELITES.

“ Now, George,” said Lady Dunvext, as the last decanter was placed upon the table, “ I must insist upon being told fully, or to the utmost length a gossip will allow, what brought you here? Not, as the lawyers have of it—‘ natural love and affection,’ I dare be sworn.”

“ With every safety may you, and sleep soundly after it, without fear of a broken oath.”

“ Well, then, since you admit that to be so, even tell us at once what brought you

here, and keep us no longer in this atrocious suspense."

"What have I not actually told you yet? How neglectful; well then, prepare your minds for a vast astonishment."

"At what?"

"Such news—such glorious news—talk of victories and gazettes!"

"Lord, George, you have lost your wits; what do you mean by it—what is there in the wind?"

"Well, now, I'll tell you; prepare to give me joy, for I have caught an heiress at last."

"Caught a what?"

"An actual *bona fide* living heiress, the unicorn of the ancients, with certain monies in the three per cents, and certain estates in broad acres, and all that sort of thing. What some parties call a most unexceptionable match; a creature I have hooked after a life of angling, a perfect golden perch, such a monster."

“What is it you mean, George? are you married?”

“Oh! no, not at all; I hav’nt even seen the lady yet, but as I needn’t describe to you too, who must know the fact, that when once a man of my illustrious descent comes into the field, the thing is done.”

“Ah! to be sure, I forgot that,” quietly replied his sister-in-law; “and pray who is she?—Where does she live? and where did you hear of her?”

“Who is she?—what’s that to do with it? Where does she live?—what can that matter? Where did I hear of her?—who can that interest? There is only one point in the whole matter worth considering; she has twenty-eight thousand a year, and I’ve got her. When I say twenty-eight thousand a year, you’ll understand she has only got fourteen in reality; but we must give it out at twenty-eight, because it sounds better. *Now*, don’t you give me joy? Hasn’t my

lucky day arrived at last ! I always used to tell you it would, though you still persisted in trying to persuade me that I should never get hold of any prize better than hanging. Don't you call that fortune, and luck, and so forth ? or rather, I meant to say, don't you consider that indubitable evidence of superior merit and abilities ?”

“ Wait, George, till you have got her, before you crow so much about it. Marriage is rather an awkward affair till the names are signed in the irrevocable book, and then it's just possible you may find the act affords you less gratification than you counted on. And why do you thus rack our curiosity ? tell us what is the name of the damsel so considerate of your superior charms ?”

“ Her name—her name—her name ? Why, what is it ?—let me see. Why, what is her name ! Oh ! surely, I must remember the name ; it's on the very tip of my tongue. Catsup ! no, that's not it. Cowslip ! no.

Cat!—Cat! it must be Catsup! And yet it can't—”

“No; surely it can't be Catsup!”

“Why no; I don't think it can be. Upon my soul I have forgotten her name already! it doesn't signify much as it's to be changed so soon. I've got her address quite right; I know where to catch her at any rate, and as for her name what matters that? I give her just forty-eight hours after our acquaintance, and then her name is lost for ever; but, however, I have even her name in my pocket-book, written down by Pierrepont, so I'll just refresh my memory.”

“Pierrepont involved in such a mercenary transaction as this!” muttered Miss Curtis. “Now I shall find out his true character at last; at any rate this can be no trick of interested persons.”

“Ah!” said Lord George suddenly, in a tone of triumph, “I thought I couldn't have lost my memorandum—here it is;”

pulling a small slip of paper from his pocket-book. "Now you shall know all about it. There is this she-Pluto's address. —Miss Acantha Cash, at Sir Simper Wily's, Grove Park, near South Shields. There it is ; Cash is the name---devilish odd I could not remember that, though, to be sure, I never had much personal acquaintance with it ; but I suppose I shall have enough for the rest of my life. Now there is something sweet even in the cognomen," continued Lord George, pressing the letter to his lips with every show of devotion. "No wonder that I thought of Catsup —Cash and Catsup are sauces for any thing." Lord George, as he gave this name, perceived a look of most peculiar intelligence pass between his sister-in-law and her 'charming companion;' but thinking, of course, that the latter would recognise in the name her own rival, the circumstance did not strike the noble officer with that degree of force that it perhaps would have

acquired, had he not known, as he fancied, the relationship in which she stood to his friend.

Lady Sidney, however, appeared extremely vexed at this "*contre-temps*," and did all in her power to prevent her relative from proceeding any further in his *mal-a-propos* course; but, as she had foretold, Lord George, during dinner, had formed a very intimate acquaintance with the bottle, and was greatly too far gone to regard any of those expressive looks, frowns, &c., by which she mutely implored him to desist from his present topic. At last, in despair, she made one more violent effort to turn the conversation.

"How was the Marquis, George, when you left town?"

"Oh! a fiddle for the Marquis! I know nothing about him. I don't trouble my head about Marquises; all that I know about, are heiresses. But, what makes you so absent? Why don't you congratulate me on

my approaching conquest? I came here expressly to ask, if I might bring my bride here for a few nights after our marriage. Of course, I shall run off with her to Gretna Green at once."

"Will you, indeed!" said Miss Curtis, speaking in the most natural and unaffected tone, just as any indifferent party taking an interest in the story might have been expected to do.

"Oh! certainly," said his Lordship; "we are so near Gretna Green, that the temptation is irresistible, and heiresses always think they are had too cheaply, unless they cost their husband the expense of posting to *the* celebrated shop. There is something in the *éclat* of the thing which is sure to flatter the mind of a silly, uneducated girl."

"Why, may I ask, if this lady is what you so much desire—why do you call her a silly, uneducated girl?"

"Oh! heiresses always are. They are

generally left to some sycophantic toady, or something of that sort. Of course, they have no more love of saying lessons and being corrected than the rest of mankind. And, therefore, the toadies, to obtain their friendship, and make as much as they can out of them, by way of presents, &c., &c., never let them hear a particle of truth; and thus they learn as little as any Hottentot can desire."

"How extremely flattered Miss Cash would be, if she could only hear you; but I suppose this is the way all we poor women are deceived, in some way or other, heiresses or not; if we have no money, we are deceived for our faces. So, between one thing and the other, the truth is rarely heard on any side."

"Excepting by the gentlemen, Miss Curtis."

"Aye, true, when gentlemen are so extremely imprudent as to insist on hearing

the truth, I have no doubt they get hold of some very unpleasant matter. Still, if it pleases the grown children, it will do ; but that is a result, I should say," added Miss Curtis, " that rarely arrives. And, so you really think you are sure to carry off this poor, unfortunate girl—are you, my Lord?"

" Oh ! certain ! It's very rarely I take the trouble of arriving at a decision ; but when once I determine to effect a thing, I never allow myself to be done out of it. Now, in the present case, I have given my word to my friend Pierrepont, to marry this heiress out of the way, to oblige him."

" Oh ! to oblige Mr. Pierrepont—is it ?" said Miss Curtis. " Ah ! I think I have heard him mention her before !"

" Why, between ourselves, I believe she is a perfect wretch, so far as figure goes, and much the same as to face—that is, I call it so, when a woman squints terrifically, has a hump-back, and is pitted with the

small-pox, enough to frighten a bonassus—which is generally held to be a strongly-nerved animal.”

While Lord George was running on in this way, divers knowing looks had been exchanged between Lady Sidney and her ‘charming companion;’ and the former, seeing how much the latter was amused by this rambling discourse of his Lordship, withdrew to the end of the room, as if for some object she required.

“Now, tell me, my Lord,” said Miss Curtis, “if you have given me a true description of this lady—and, I confess, I have heard Mr. Pierrepont do very similar justice to her charms—how can you be so mercenary, as to ally yourself to such a creature, for the mere sake of her money? I should have thought that such a motive was the last one for which you would marry. Where can you have adopted notions so contrary to every thing human beings ought to cherish? How you can even

show them in jest I don't know ; have you no touch of human affections, no feeling of love ?”

“ No, not a particle ; but I've plenty of debt.”

“ Come, come, George,” said Lady Sidney, “ if you two are going to discuss those endless topics, love and debt, there will be no end to the matter ; therefore, I warn you, I have ordered our horses to be ready in three quarters of an hour, I shall go and put on my habit, and shall expect you to accompany us as an *escort*, as in duty bound.”

“ Escort you ! indeed I should have been too happy to have had the pleasure, had circumstances permitted it ; as it is—in twenty minutes, at the outside, a chaise and four will be at the door to take me to South Shields. It's an awful extravagance, four horses ! but on the strength of the heiress—”

“ Pooh ! pooh ! George, psha ! you will never carry this mad frolic any farther.

You had much better not go, don't you think so, Miss Curtis?"

"No, indeed," said Miss Curtis, smiling, in reply. "I think quite the contrary; by all means I should like to see him set off. I want to see if he is as great a lady-killer as he fancies himself to be; I am afraid he will miss his market."

"Oh! well, if you advise him to go, I suppose he must; but I myself would rather he stayed away. Come, George, if you will decide on remaining with us, we really will try to make ourselves agreeable to you."

"Indeed! that's very kind, and I quite grieve to turn my back on such a handsome offer. But, unless you can make up between you fourteen thousand a year, in lieu of that I should lose by not going, I really am afraid that I must refuse you the pleasure of my delightful society."

"Did you, Lady Sidney, did you ever hear so conceited a personage in your life?"

Now, was I, or was I not, right in calling you a fop, Lord George?"

"Well, I am afraid I must admit I have a little tendency that way. But you must acknowledge, before we part, that, for a fop, I am a very decent fellow."

"Well, my Lord, I don't know about that, I shall consider that proposition hereafter; and as to giving you fourteen thousand a year for your society for a day, I am sure, if this Miss Acantha is of my mind, which I do suspect she will be, she wouldn't give you the fourteenth part of that sum to have your society the whole of her life."

"Oh! if you were Miss Acantha I would marry you before you were eight and forty hours older, for a dead certainty."

"Would you, indeed, my Lord! no, that you would not, rely on it. I'll have nothing to say to mercenary suitors, who make love to brown acres and three per cents, and all that sort of idolatry, perhaps the very worst

ever known since the age of the golden calf. Depend on it that would not be my choice, nor, I suspect, any other woman's. What say you, Lady Sidney?" But here, the latter, unable any longer to preserve her gravity, quietly slipped out of the room, and left the two flirting disputants together.

As soon as Lord George perceived that Lady Sidney was going, he hastened to follow her, to obtain a few moments' private conversation on some little point ; and while his back was turned, Miss Curtis walked across the room to a vase that stood on a carved table, there amusing herself at the expense of the flowers, by plucking off one or two of the leaves, she exclaimed with a gentle sigh—

“Who would ask to possess wealth, to become the object of such base speculations? But he never can be in earnest, or he would not venture to express himself so openly! The idea of his daring to say he had never felt the power of love! That must be meant

to try my incredulity ;” then taking a glance at herself in the glass, she added, “ I scarcely thought there was that man breathing, that would dare to tell me so to my face, I have a good mind to make him repent his temerity ; let me see—I have just twelve minutes, looking at the little watch that hung at her side ; and now to make him change his note, and pay for his audacity.”

Just as Miss Curtis came to this warlike determination, the object of her dangerous experiment entered the room, and walking directly to where Miss Curtis stood, the latter turned sharp round and said,—

“ My Lord, did I not understand that you had been at sea ? ”

“ Yes, certainly, for many years.”

“ But you still belong to that glorious service, do you not ? ”

“ Faith ! not I, I left it long ago, in deep disgust of having too many masters ; and for a glorious service, commend me rather to the New Police.”

“Fie, fie, my Lord, surely you cannot be a living creature with a heart, you must actually move and breathe by steam, to have dwelt upon that living field of deathless victory, and not to have loved it. To me its deeps seem to possess the voice of long remembered years. Surely no British heart can disclaim as dear to its affections that element which has been purpled with the blood of Young and Nelson, Faulkner and Riou, with a bright host beside. But, no wonder that I love it, it seems to me but yesterday that I left the shores of India. Come—my Lord!” gaily added Acantha, turning sharply round, and flourishing her whip. “Will you wager me some portion of your heiress’ estate, that I don’t put ‘a ship about’ without missing a word?”

“Done!” cried his Lordship, in exstasy, adding considerable doubts as to his companion being in earnest; but he was speedily satisfied on this point, by Acantha’s taking up a sheet of music-paper, rolling it up like

a tube, and using it as a speaking-trumpet, when, one after another, she gave, or rather mimicked, all the commands used in the operation—which is called ‘tacking,’ with a fidelity and degree of knowledge that quite transported my Lord George. As soon as Acantha perceived that she had produced this effect, she hastened to get away. In vain Lord George attempted to detain his fair and new acquaintance.

“Would she ‘wear ship?’”

“No.”

“Could she reef topsails?”

“Time would show.” At last, despite all entreaties, she gained the door. “Adieu, most noble Lord, adieu, you have no idea what a delightful scene awaits you at South Shields; but pray, when you are there, don’t forget me, and all the good advice I have given you.”

“No,” said his lordship, with a sigh, and shaking his head at the merry orphan, who seemed delighted at the testimony of her

power exhibited in his Lordship's eyes. "No, there's not much chance that I shall forget you in a hurry, and that no one knows better than yourself. In conclusion, I shall only rejoice that my friend Pierrepoint made your acquaintance before I did, or else you might have taught me, in a moment of folly, to forget all my admirable philosophy of heiress wedding."

"Are you sure of that, my Lord? Well, I think you may be mistaken even there; and as I know your impatience to gain the side of this golden Acantha, the last thing I wish is to detain you any longer at mine, and so, my Lord, once more adieu;" and dropping a profound courtesy to the younger son, in another minute Lord George stood alone looking on the flower garden, and asking himself whether he might not as well postpone his journey to South Shields till the day following. While yet, however, debating this interesting point, the rattle of a chaise was heard in the court-yard, and

the servant came to announce the arrival of the carriage-and-four that was to take him to South Shields.

“ ‘That decides the point,’ ” muttered Lord George, “and better that it should be so ; she is engaged to Pierrepont, and never can be anything to me, so away goes every thought of her—and yet she is a beautiful creature,” added he, hesitating in his march towards the door, “and described those sea scenes inimitably—for a woman wonderfully !—how exquisitely it would heighten all the enjoyments of life to pass one’s days in the society of such a creature. After all it is a pity that money is so necessary, for nothing on earth is half so delightful in its enjoyment as intellect combined with female beauty ; but, however, what cannot be cannot be, and ‘*che sara sara*’ is just as true reversed, as proper, and yet after this bright being, how doubly nauseous will be the dose of the heiress ! At any rate, there’s excitement in the pursuit, so now we’ll on,”

and taking up the whip which Miss Curtis had dropped, Lord George sallied forth, and before ten minutes had elapsed was rolling on towards Grove Park, his adventures at which place shall be marked hereafter.

CHAPTER XIII.

His arrival only seemed to increase Lucretia's anguish.' - -

GOLDSMITH.

SCARCELY had there rolled from the gate of Lady Sidney's villa, the chaise and four that bore Lord George to the house of Sir Simper, when that worthy and excellent trustee himself arrived in his plain chocolate chariot, bound on a visit to give Acantha the ultimate resolution of Pierrepont, "that he could not possibly think of marrying her." Having driven up to the door and learnt that the ladies, although on the point of going out, had not yet gone, Sir Simper at once alighted, sending in a message to his intended victim, that he should not de-

tain her more than a few minutes, and begging to see her on some particular business. It was some time before Lady Sidney could persuade her friend to grant this request at all, so much did Acantha dislike the person of the worthy Indian, but at last, on condition that Lady Sidney was to be present during the whole of the interview, she agreed to appear.

“Tell Sir Simper that we are waiting for our horses,” said Acantha to the servant, in order to insure, if possible, that he should have no excuse for prolonging his stay, and after a few minutes the undesigning youth was shown into the boudoir of Lady Sidney.

“Ah, dearest Lady Sidney,” exclaimed the Indian, running up to the elder lady and clasping her right hand in both his own, and pressing it, though delicately, yet with as much ‘*empressement*’ as if he had been dying for the last twelvemonth to behold her, “how truly charmed I am to see you looking so well—surely there must be some-

thing in your Carlisle air, which has the prerogative of beauty in it. You appear to grow younger and younger every day."

"Well, my dear Sir Simper, if you think *that* the effect of the air, why don't you come and live here yourself; it would be just the very thing suited to your case."

Sir Simper winced most grievously under this bitter piece of wit of the wicked widow's, and muttering to himself some words, which it was quite as well for both their friendships that Lady Sidney did not hear, bowed lowly for the compliment, and then turned to Acantha.

"I hope, dearest Miss Acantha, you too are well! How grieved I am to think that I should have been obliged to have disturbed you just at this moment, when, unless I am mistaken, you are about to indulge in the wholesome exercise of riding."

"Oh! I pray don't mention that," said Acantha somewhat briskly. "Business, you know, Sir Simper, must be attended to, and

I have no doubt if it could possibly have waited you would not have intruded on us."

Poor Sir Simper, that word, intruded, was the next arrow that went quivering to his heart, and sounded, if possible, one degree worse than the impertinence of the widow.

"I do hope, my dear young lady, it is not altogether an intrusion," replied the Indian; "those only who have had the onerous duty of trustee to discharge, can tell how often one is pained to exercise the inevitable duties of its responsible charge."

"Yes, Sir Simper, you have often told me so, and I believe it; but I am happy to say that your responsibilities on that score will be soon over, and I shall be delighted at the fact."

"Of course."

"I mean for your sake," said the lady, in a most significant manner, which was quite as much as to say—though I tell you this out of politeness, you will, of course.

understand quite the reverse, and that the cause of my joy will, in reality be, the getting rid of all importunity from so troublesome a personage. This, certainly, was ungrateful conduct to a trustee who had received all sorts of plague for the last three years ; but we have already seen that Acantha, when she thought herself about to be victimized, could play the defensive sufficiently well. We may, hereafter, perhaps, have an opportunity of seeing the softer parts of her character ; on this occasion, at any rate, she played the Tartar most decidedly, and not easily foiled, as the Indian certainly was, he felt that he had quite his match in that young girl notwithstanding her inexperience. Taking time, therefore, to consider how he should best be able to explain the real object of his visit, he now went into several collateral matters, and first of all, with considerable skill remarked—

“ Before I go into the new business which

has brought me here, let me discharge myself of a little matter which arose at my last interview with you, Miss Acantha. I think you mentioned to me that you wished to purchase a shawl of a particular pattern which had just been imported; an opportunity presented itself of my buying one of rather a better quality than those usually found in the shops, and so I took the liberty of securing one for you, which I trust you will do me the honour to accept. Perhaps, Lady Sidney will be kind enough to ring the bell, and order up a little package of ladies' matters, which I ventured to bring with me."

"Oh! certainly," said Lady Sidney, her manner intuitively softening towards a man who had the sense and discretion to adopt this eastern mode of obtaining his objects, whatever they might be; even although she supposed the presents to be exclusively destined for Acantha, it was impossible to be angry with a man who proposed delighting

her sight with the inspection of a new shawl. The bell was accordingly rung, and when the man-servant brought up a very bulky package, it was quite evident that something more than a shawl was about to make its appearance ; and, almost without thinking of it, ample reason as both the ladies had for being angry with the hollow Indian, they unhesitatingly lent him their best assistance in untying the folds of the parcel that was to gratify their feminine propensities.

“ Oh, that really is beautiful !”

“ Oh; that is perfectly exquisite !”

“ Isn't that truly charming?” were the expressions that mutually fell from the lips of first one lady, and then the other, as they beheld divers articles of wearing apparel, taken by Sir Simper from his assortment, and presented part to one, and part to the other. Even Acantha was actually, for the time, quite won from her hatred, and this, to those who know what a stern and thorough hater

she is, must be the best proof how admirably Sir Simper played his cards. Sending, instantly, for three or four looking-glasses ; our fair friends seemed to have forgotten their late animosity, and to be now wholly absorbed in admiring the becoming elegance of their new robes. Even, however, to admiration there is a limit, and Sir Simper, carefully watching the moment when the new toys began to flag in their absorbing influence, adroitly turned to the object of his present visit, saying as he did so—

“ My dear young friend, I perceive the evening is already drawing to a close, so now you will, perhaps, excuse me for venturing upon the little matter on which you have to decide ; after which, you will be able to finish your ride of pleasure.”

“ Ah, true ! I had forgotten ; now then Sir Simper, what is your visit about ?” Sir Simper gave a look at Lady Sidney, as much as to say—

“Am I obliged to go into this delicate affair before a third party?” but if the worthy man desired a *tête-à-tête*, his hope in that matter was speedily terminated, by Acantha saying out loud—

“You needn’t fear saying anything before Lady Sydney, I have no secrets from her.” It needed only this to complete Sir Simper’s mortification, for still worse than his dislike, that she should hear what he had to say, was his disinclination that she should be made acquainted with such reluctance; however, the die was cast, and nothing remained for him but to proceed.

“Well then, my dear Miss Acantha, I may here, very briefly, state that the subject—ahem—that is the topic,” and the Indian, perhaps, from feeling that he had a very odious task in hand, made an effort to assume a light *non-chalantic* tone, and yet, at the same time, felt conscious that it was but an effort, after all, in which effort he was wholly unable to succeed. And thus,

though naturally very fluent, and seldom staggered by difficulties in conversation, he now hummed and hesitated—cleared his throat, and applied to his snuff-box like the merest tyro.

After changing his phrase three or four times, he at last proceeded.

“The subject on which I wish to address you, Miss Acantha, is your position.”

“My position !” said Acantha, delighted to torment him, and looking down at her feet as if the Indian’s words alluded to her attitude ; and moving slightly as she spoke, “Pray what is the matter with my position ? it seems to me, Sir Simper, you are rather hard to please this morning.”

“And so, indeed, I should be, Madam,” retorted her guardian, “if I could find fault with any position of so beautiful a figure ; but the subject on which I have to address you is of a very different nature.”

“Now, Sir Simper,” said Acantha, “that is the last compliment I shall allow you to

pay me. I should have thought you were too much a man of business to pay a compliment on a matter of mere pounds, shillings, and pence ; for into such questions, I presume, all discussions between trustee and ward must, sooner or later, resolve themselves."

"Why, not exactly, Miss Acantha ; but you shall hear me out, and see what you think of it."

"Very well—now, then, speak on ; and, remember, no more compliments, or I shall think you mean to mystify me—and, I warn you, that is very difficult."

"Now, Miss Acantha, it's you who are misbehaving yourself on a matter of business."

"Oh ! don't flatter yourself that I am joking. Do you think that I can't seriously assert, that you are capable of mystifying any one. I pray you, do greater justice to my powers of discernment. I know no one better calculated—no one ever takes the

trouble to flatter another, unless for the special purpose of gaining something by fiction which truth could not win. So, if you'll take that as your test of flattery through life, I don't think you'll ever be much taken in by it. Now, what is it you really have to urge?"

"Urge, my young friend!—Why, I have nothing to urge. I merely came to inform you of a matter which, I thought, might be somewhat unpleasant to your feelings."

"If that be all you are afraid of, pray, speak on. I have just parted from a young gentleman, who told me he had no feelings; and, I confess, I was so shocked at his case, that I was extravagant enough, till he could pick up a few on his travels, to lend him the whole of mine. You may, therefore, consider me, for the present, as a young lady who has changed places with him; and so, for the time being, has no feelings. Now, if that won't re-assure you, and give con-

fidence to your trembling young soul, I don't know what will. However vile your budget may be, out with it—pour on—I will endure.”

“Why, truly, Madam, if you are in such excellent spirits, you could almost bear to hear that the whole of your fortune was lost to you, instead of that which I come to tell you—which is, namely, the reverse.”

“As how?”

“Why, I lament to say, that, after taking the utmost pains to investigate the matter fully, I am unable, notwithstanding all my partiality for any relation of my late esteemed friend, your uncle—I say, notwithstanding this, I find that your cousin, Mr. Pierrepont's manners and habits have, at length, grown so outrageously dissolute—in fact, so subversive of all proper and all moral feeling, that, deeply as I should delight to do any thing kind and charitable by him, I really cannot, in the conscientious discharge of my duty, advise you to think,

for an instant, of uniting yourself to any such person."

"But, my dear Sir, do you remember the tenor of my late uncle's will—if I refuse to marry Mr. Pierrepont, I forfeit my whole share in the estate, with the exception of a paltry three hundred a-year."

"Madam, I have not forgotten that, believe me. And, as a proof that nothing conducive to your happiness escapes my care, I have the delight now to inform you, that you may have no fear on any such score, as I have myself already seen this, I regret to say, weak young man, and have laid before him his own conduct in so forcible a point of view, that he has, at my suggestion, resolved to abandon all claim to your uncle's estate, and leave you free to bestow it, together with this priceless hand," pressing Acantha's rosy fingers to his lips, "wherever you shall find some one more sensible of its inestimable worth."

"But, my dear Sir," said Acantha, smil-

ing, "this is a most important matter; and, if I accept this refusal of my cousin, the unfortunate young man renders himself a complete beggar."

"You forget, Madam, that he has three hundred a-year."

"Yes—but what is three hundred a-year out of an estate that produces above fourteen thousand?"

"That, Madam, is a matter for his own consideration; and he may thank his own folly for having to consider it."

"Well—but, my dear Sir Simper, we should remember that we are all fallible; and, though he may be foolish, that is nothing more than we have all been in our day. But, if we were all punished in as severe a ratio, what direful calamities should we not be undergoing; and, as we ourselves have received mercy, I think it is our bounden duty to show some to others."

"Madam, your uncle was a most excellent man—a worthy, religious, and good

man, in every point of view. The estate has passed to you by that uncle's will ; and the same will has inflicted a penalty, which we are even now discussing. We must suppose, therefore, that this was a matter which he took into deep consideration before he made the will. And, as he made this disposition of his own property, it is, in truth, blaming him, to find fault with the severity of a forfeiture of that condition, on which alone his property was ever granted to either of you ! I am sure your last wish is to be guilty of any disrespect to a relative to whom you owe so much . Besides, you forget that this young man has no such cause of complaint. Bad as he is, he does not even attempt to allege any. He knew very well, from the first, what were the conditions of the document, under which alone he could hope to inherit the noble fortune you have mentioned. He might, if he had chosen, have rendered himself in every way worthy of the happiness of your hand. It would

have been just as easy so to have educated himself, as to have been an unexceptionable suitor, as to have taken the course which he has done, of rendering himself utterly unsuitable. As, therefore, he has thought fit to make his own bed, he must lie upon it.”

“Yes, my dear Sir; but the very phrase you use in one part of your argument, shows me that you are quite wrong in another.”

“In what way?”

“Why, for instance, you say the will is no hardship to Mr. Pierrepont, because, as he was cognizant of its conditions at the first, so he might, if he had pleased, have rendered himself eligible to have been my husband.”

“Precisely—that is what I mean. How is that capable of any other interpretation than I have given it.”

“Why—in this way. How can we tell that he is not suitable to be my husband, when I have never even seen him?”

“What! Miss Acantha,” cried Sir Sim-

per, starting back, in well affected horror, “can you, for a moment, doubt that he is utterly unfit to be your suitor, when I tell you, that he is one of the most dissolute young men of the day—one of the greatest libertines and rakes that it is possible to meet with?”

“Well, but” said Acantha, “surely you must allow something for the happy and proper influence of a correct home. Remember how young he is; there surely must be every hope of reformation in his case, that ever was held out by that of any man; and my friend here, Lady Sidney, on whose advice, as having seen much more of the world than myself, I can place every reliance, Lady Sidney agrees with me, that I should not, on so important a matter as this, be doing my duty, either in refusing to marry him myself, or in accepting his refusal to marry me, without having a personal interview,—don’t you think so, Lady Sidney?”

“ Why, certainly, I confess, I should not myself agree to decide so important a matter, not only without seeing the young gentleman, but, without actually taking the trouble of knowing something of his character from my own personal observation. As to a man being reported a rake, a libertine, and all that sort of thing, any young man of spirit is a rake, in the eyes of some people, who think, in Shakspeare’s words, that there ought to be no more cakes and ale, nor ginger any longer hot in the mouth, because they have happened for the last three months to be tolerably virtuous. Why, Sir Simper, I have often heard you called a rake, myself, and I am sure you know how little you deserve the accusation, though, I confess, I never could endure the sight of you till I heard that report. For my own part, I rather like a rake—they make the best husbands always.”

“ Well, Madam, if that is your taste, I can only confess, it is very strange. But,

however,—coming to the point, it might be all very proper that Miss Acantha should have an opportunity of making her cousin's acquaintance, if the question were—whether she should herself refuse Mr. Pierrepont, and give up the estate instead of him. But here, when he has saved her all further trouble, by forfeiting the estate, I cannot see what object is attained, by running this needless risk."

"Risk! risk! of what my dear Sir?"

"Why, Madam, that when you meet him, he may alter his mind, and decline to give up the estate, but prefer to marry you. In which case, think of the horror of having unnecessarily sealed your own ruin, by giving yourself up to a young man so unprincipled as Mr. Pierrepont—a gambler, and a libertine! by uniting yourself to whom, you will in the first place, most likely, lose your estate at the hazard table, and your own happiness, by his ill treatment and infidelity."

“ Why, certainly, there is that danger,” said Acantha, “ but my Lady Sidney and myself have arranged a pretty little plot to avoid all that, and still allow me the pleasure—which I confess would be a very great one—of refusing, in person, this dissolute and bad young man.”

“ A plot, Madam; what plot, by any possibility, can guard you against the danger I have named?”

“ Why, I think we have one; have we not, Lady Sidney?”

“ Plague take it,” muttered Sir Simper to himself, “ just as I expected! This infernal widow’s at the bottom of every thing that interferes with my plans; I believe, after all, I might as well have tossed the presents into the Dead Sea, as have tried to blind either of these two young sphinxes; after all, I suppose there is no help for it now, but in hearing out what they have to say. What mischief is coming, I wonder, to upset all my projects?” and Sir Simper

pretended to be looking into his pocket book, as if to discover there, some fresh trace of Pierrepont's alleged unworthiness.

“Now, Sir Simper,” said Acantha, “we’ll let you into our plot, but you must promise you won’t tell.” Sir Simper, who thought it wise to make no promise on any subject where there were two to listen to it, merely bowed his head, and Acantha, who knew he was sure not to tell, for—this, best of reasons—that it was against his interest to do so, felt quite content with this mute assertion of secrecy; and proceeded to detail the intentions of herself and confederate Lady Sidney.

CHAPTER XIV.

“Choose whom thou wilt, I will resign,
“If love or faith be like to mine.”

HENRY WILLOUGHBY.

“You see, Sir Simper,” said Acantha, “at present you are inclined to doubt the possibility of any plot on the part of Lady Sidney and myself, sufficiently perfect to ensure my escaping the danger of Mr. Pierrepont’s retracting his present rejection of myself and thee state, and changing round to the determination of taking us both.”

“I confess, madam, I do; and therefore, before it is too late, I implore you to alter your own resolutions on the point;—forego any little trifling amusement you might derive from seeing a man humble himself be-

fore you ;—be content to let well alone—receive his declination through me—should any disputed question of law arise, I am of course the best evidence of his undoubted refusal to marry you, and thus you will spare your own feelings a trial they will certainly have most unnecessarily to undergo, in witnessing the pain of his exposure.”

“ Why, as to that, you know I do not think he deserves much compassion, after having the coolness to refuse me without the trouble of coming to see what I might be like. But, however, to cut short the matter, see him I am resolved I will—nothing shall debar me from that—not as a triumph, as you put it, but solely as a duty—and the fact of its being a painful one only the more determines me that it must be done, and that no danger will occur to me, you will agree, when you once listen to my proposal.”

Sir Simper, with the resigned air of one

who is obliged to see his best built castle knocked about his ears, at last gave a patient attention to his fair ward.

“You see, Sir Simper,” said the latter, “wonderful as it is to relate, some busy body or other seems to have impressed on Mr. Pierrepont’s mind, though I admit, most fortunately for me, all sorts of ridiculous misconceptions as to my personal appearance and disposition, till at length I have it from excellent authority, he actually imagines me to be a perfect devil in mind, and if not humpbacked, at the very least marked with the small-pox, with much more of the same sort. Now, therefore, the plot of Lady Sidney and myself is this, that I shall paint myself to represent the very being he believes me—model my manners on the report that he has received.”

“— But do you really believe that he has received these reports,” interrupted Sir Simper.

“I’m sure of it,” replied Acantha.

“Most extraordinary!” said the other.

“Well, be that as it may, it does not signify much—however—pock-marked I will be on the day he comes to see me — it will now soon be here you know, and then if I find that he is the sort of person that I imagine him to be, why it won’t be necessary for me to undeceive him, and so we need never meet again.”

“Well, Miss Acantha, if you really are determined to see the libertine, perhaps the plan you have detailed to me would be the best you can pursue. Not that I hesitate to declare, that you would be infinitely wiser in pursuing no scheme of the kind.”

“Oh! see him, I’m determined I will, therefore you need not discuss that point any further.”

“Very well, madam, since that is so, the only prudent mode of indulging your unfortunate curiosity is by means of the plan you have adopted. But, indeed, ladies, I tremble for the contamination which —”

“Oh, we neither of us would be contaminated for the world!” cried both the ladies in a breath.

“But,” added Lady Sidney, “since Miss Acantha is resolved on seeing him I agree with you, we have hit upon the safest plan of doing so, and I am very glad it meets with your approbation as her guardian.”

“Why, indeed, Lady Sidney, you must really forgive my repeating what I have already said, that my thoughts and feelings on the subject go quite the other way.”

“Ah!” said Lady Sidney, “that is as to her seeing him at all, the responsibility of that she must take upon her own shoulders. When I said your approbation, I merely meant as it related to her using this disguise, seeing that, in one mode or another, she is determined to have an interview with him. The only doubt I had in my own mind was whether any disguise at all would be permissible.”

“Why, really, Lady Sidney, if I were to

consult my own love of candour only—I should say certainly not; for I hate any thing like concealment or perversity of the truth. But when I look at the position, I may say the singular position in which Miss Acantha is placed, I must say that I think her only chance of safety lies in the little playfulness, as I may call it, which she has determined to adopt on this occasion.”

“ Well, I think so too, Sir Simper, and am, as I said before, exceedingly glad that our views correspond.”

“ Well, my dear Madam, though I cannot exactly say it is what I should have proposed myself, still, as Miss Acantha is determined to go through with this—what shall I call it? masquerading affair, I should most strenuously advise her to have every thing well done. For instance, I would have the small-pox painted on by a first-rate artist, who is accustomed to disguise the human frame for the stage or representations of that sort, and have the room

darkened, and all those little accessories that so much heighten the real effect produced."

"Why, yes, Sir Simper, I agree with you, and you may rely upon it, if I once take this scheme in hand, you shall have no cause to be ashamed of your pupil."

"Why, yes, Lady Sidney, I know you are a perfect mistress of art, in all its departments," replied Sir Simper, returning with interest, the sarcasm with which he had been indulged himself in the course of the conversation; and then adding—"Let me see!—This affair will come off, I think, the day after to-morrow, will it not? for that being the day you come of age, is fixed by the will, for your final decision."

"Yes," said Acantha, it must come off the day after to-morrow."

"Very well, then, Madam, do you get every thing ready, and I will not fail to be in attendance, and mark how you acquit yourself."

“ Why, as to that, Sir Simper,” cried both the ladies at once, “ Do you think that would be advisable ?”

“ Why not, my dear Lady Sidney ?”

“ Why, suppose, for instance, it was said hereafter, that you were a party to any little matter of this sort ? If attributed to two silly women, it would bear the aspect of a mere joke ; but narrated of a gentleman, at your time of life,” — here Sir Simper winced confoundedly, — “ it might, perhaps, be tortured into a matter of deception ; because, you must bear in mind, that this will decide a very large stake in point of value.”

“ Oh ! as to that, my dear Madam,” said the Indian, “ pray rest perfectly easy on that score. The well established reputation of my own character, is the best protection from any false rumours of the kind.”

“ Yes, that may be all very well,” interposed Acantha, “ I havn’t the least concern about your character ; but there is an

argument of much more importance to me, than your reputation—namely ;—my part in the play, will be no slight or trivial matter to go through ; I am at all times sufficiently nervous, and if I knew you were by, it would materially discompose me in my enactment of the part,” and Acantha gave a look at Lady Sidney, to support this view of the case ; it being quite clear, that though Sir Simper did not, or pretended not to see it, still, for some reasons of their own, neither of the ladies seemed to desire the presence of the trustee, during the progress of the little mummary they contemplated.

Thus mutely appealed to, Lady Sidney instantly gave the support desired by replying—

“ Why, if you ask me Acantha, of course I am bound to admit that it is next to impossible, that you could, with third parties looking on, go through so difficult a part, with the same confidence and security,

which you would otherwise enjoy, if there were no person present except our three selves—that's undoubted."

"To be sure it is," rejoined Acantha, "it would be so extremely awkward, you know, if I were to ruin the whole object of the thing by a sudden titter."

"Oh! good heavens, that would be dreadful," replied Sir Simper, "anything would be better than that, and if the presence of a fourth party would be likely, or have the least tendency to such a result—"

"Nothing would be more likely," interposed Acantha.

"Then," said Sir Simper—"I admit it's not to be thought of."

"Well, I am very glad of that, my good guardian, and you may rely upon it you shall have the very earliest information of the result."

"Well, well! on second thoughts, that will be better; I shall, I confess, if only for your sake, be anxious to know how the interview goes off."

“Oh, you may be sure you shall hear of that immediately.”

“Very well, then I will rely on your sending me such intelligence ; and as there are many matters connected with the estate that will require attention on your coming of age, perhaps you will excuse my now taking leave of you.”

“Oh! certainly, Sir Simper. But suppose,” Acantha archly added, as she saw the Indian about to vanish from the door, in what she thought, far too good a temper for him to be permitted to indulge, and which, therefore, she wickedly resolved, as far as in her lay, to irritate. “Suppose, Sir Simper, by any accident, I were to fall in love with this dissolute rake myself—think what a position I should then be in, to lose my heart, and yet have to refuse the captor of it.”

“My dear Madam,” said Sir Simper, turning round, evidently direfully alarmed, and about to relinquish the door which he

held in his hand, to come back into the boudoir, and fight the battle over again.

“There—there, you needn’t be afraid of it,” quickly added the beautiful tormentor, as soon as she perceived her words had produced all the mischief she desired they should create; “rely upon it so worthless a person as you describe him to be, will never be likely to disturb my peace. I did but suggest the matter as a joke, because I have a fancy that you look so much handsomer when your face is a little elongated. Well, good bye, Sir Simper, fare you well; now don’t go flirting too much, or you will earn the same character that has been already given to young Pierrepont.”

“Ah! I knew you must be jesting, like a naughty beauty as you are,” and Sir Simper waved an elegant adieu to both the ladies, and descended to his weary coachman.

“Well!” said Lady Sidney to Acantha, as Sir Simper left the room, “I think we

have sent that swain away with as good a heart-ache as any man might desire for a morning's amusement. What a good-for-nothing little torment you are, Acantha, just as the notion had got comfortable possession of his mind, that his whole plot was going on to the utmost point of satisfaction, to knock down his every castle in the air."

"Well, I confess," said Acantha, "I dearly delight in teasing any one—it may be very wrong and very improper to cherish such notions—but as it is my particular fault, I suppose it's better at once to confess it."

"Well, if that was your object, you certainly have accomplished it; for though he appeared to believe you, when you asserted that you could never think of falling in love with such a person—I could see that the iron had entered into his soul, and that he went away, half choked with suspicion, of having aided to bring about the very

catastrophe he has been most anxious to avoid."

"Yes, I think that was the impression on his mind, and I confess to you, I have not feeling enough for him to regret that it is so. What think you of the case, as it now stands—do you think our former suspicions are correct?"

"Most entirely correct—I watched him the whole time he was talking to you—his whole look, attitude, every thing convinced me that he has been nursing the hope of inducing you to listen to his addresses, provided he can only once remove from his path, the formidable rival he finds placed there by your uncle's will."

"Well, then, if that really is the case, I vote we show him no mercy."

"Well, as far as carrying out against him our late plot, I confess I have no very strong intentions of lenity towards him myself, and yet it is a pity that you can place so little reliance upon him, for, in conver-

sation and manner, he certainly is a most agreeable person."

"Well, my dear Lady Sidney, there is no disputing matters of taste, I suppose. I feel differently from you on that point, possibly from the fact of his being my guardian; and I own, I am so perverse a creature, it would not at all surprise me, to find myself involved in a violent quarrel with my husband on the first day of our marriage, from a simple dislike and detestation of having any one placed in authority over me."

"Well! it is not pleasant, I must really admit; but my dear girl, if you use your powers discreetly, you will find that it is you who will be placed in authority over him, and not the reverse, as silly people would suppose."

"Well, that's a much more agreeable construction to place upon it, certainly, and I'm only glad to hear it; and now, before the evening's gone, let us go out and

take our ride, we can finish our little stratagems on horseback."

"Agreed," said the other, and once more arranging themselves and their various presents, which Sir Simper had fruitlessly taken the trouble and expense of conveying down from town, Lady Sidney gave the necessary orders for their steeds, and withdrew to her own apartment.

CHAPTER XV.

“ Love is a breach of reason’s laws—a scourge of noble wits,
Yet, hurt her not, lest I sustain the smart,
Which am content to lodge her in my heart,”

THOMAS WATSON.

THE progress of our story, now leads us on to note what were the fortunes that attended the gallant Lord George in the pursuit of his frolic ; to have rightly estimated his character, it would have been necessary for the reader to have known him, in order to believe that such an original mortal did exist in this jog trot world of ours.

Many people are ordinarily inconsistent, but Lord George’s mind appeared, as if it were especially made to prove how perfect a hodge-podge, of different springs of action, could be got together in the same brain.

We know that it was already late when he set out upon his journey. The postmaster had been unable to provide him with a close carriage, and, hearing that it was for a young man that the equipage was wanted, took the liberty of substituting an open britchska, for the usual and more convenient vehicle which had been required of him.

For some time his Lordship rolled on,—whistling, singing, and smoking his cigar; and enjoying himself very much at his ease, and not “caring as he ought for critic’s cavils.” At length, however, becoming rather cold in the open carriage, he called to the foremost postboy, whose exercise it appears filled him with envy, and actually insisted upon the lad giving up the occupation of riding one of the leaders, to come into the carriage; while he, instead, got out upon the horse, and left the postboy smoking a cigar in his place inside; and thus they rattled on.

Luckily for his Lordship, the hour was late when they arrived at Grove Park, or, in all probability, Miss Circumspect, who kept house for her brother, and was proverbially the greatest screw in the world,—which means, about ten degrees worse than Sir Simper,—might have refused him admittance; however, to have done so at such a moment, was to have condemned him to a further ride of several miles—no very agreeable matter at that hour of night; and when she learnt the rank of the party that demanded admittance, every scruple gave way; since she was one of those obsequious people the peerage ought to canonize, though it very ungratefully does not; and who seemed to think that anything of, or belonging to, a Lord, ought to be privileged to the greatest possible extent; and, if ever idolatry should take full possession of the mind of any one of this class, there can be no doubt of their insisting, that their idol's name

shall be enrolled in the ranks of the Upper-House. People, in short, who can best be described, by saying, that they would rather live in the company of a dead Lord, than breathe the wholesome air of heaven in the society of a living commoner; and of whom it may be remarked, "*en passant*," that their punishment ought to be the consummation of their predilections. As if, that pestilent democrat, the worm, felt his dull teeth grow powerless on offal that once bore a titled name;—since to this humbling tragedy, each portion of the farce of life must turn at last!

However, Miss Circumspect was one of those creatures, as we said before, who do not trouble themselves with such reflections; and on the moment that she heard of the arrival of a Lord George—it mattered not to her, Lord George who—every thing was forgotten, but the delight of entertaining a branch of the peerage—an event that had not happened in her brother's

house since the last County Election ; for, though fond of title, he preferred, like a wise man, to enjoy it at the house of any person, rather than at his own ; since if a noble peer be a dull man, he has, at least the good taste to enjoy, in his own house, clever and entertaining people about him.

Now, however, in the absence of her brother, whom she was momentarily expecting to return, she felt she should not only luxuriate on the privilege of having the noble Lord, whoever he might be, beneath her roof ; but for some short space, at any rate, possess him entirely to herself. Influenced by these feelings, an order was given for his Lordship's instant admission ; and at the same time, the whole house was put in requisition to get ready a handsome supper for the doubtlessly tired Lord.

We must now say a word or two as to Miss Circumspect, or as she was termed—Aunt Circumspect—herself. She was one of those ladies who had, somewhat unwisely,

as she too late found out, over-stayed her market. She possessed a very decent fortune — namely, sixty thousand pounds ; but with it, unfortunately, had also come to hand, a number of kind friends, never wearied of insisting, that she must not, as they termed it, throw herself away ; as if, indeed, she had been a dish of skimmed-milk, which the friends aforesaid deemed likely to decant itself out of the first open window.

Always intent, however, upon realising this inimitable doctrine, of not throwing herself away, she had “ turned up her nose ” — and Nature had assisted her here — in high disdain, at numerous good offers of neighbouring swains ; utterly rejecting those who might be called poor men, because they did not present further wealth — that title for which she herself sighed. While, for those, who could not be said to come under the exact ban of property, she contented herself, like a fool for her pains, with taking, and

what was worse, following, the opinion of the next inheritor of all her property—should she only happen to die off, before she could make up her mind, as to the proper party whom she might consistently marry, without being made, what she termed, a mere matter of bargain and sale, by interested people for the sake of her money. She, good soul, never perceiving, in her great desire to steer clear of interested people, that she was all the time making herself the prey of one, interested to the highest degree, who was at her elbow throughout every transaction; and, so, possessed the best opportunity of selling her happiness, over and over again, with the least possible suspicion of having any inclination to do so. All this, arose, simply, from the fact, of that said interested party, being her own brother. Indeed, if any one had whispered to her, that so near a relation in blood as her brother, was interested in retarding her marriage, or, in other words, in tamper-

ing with her happiness, no one could have been more shocked than herself.

Not that it is surprising, however deplorable, that half the projected marriages broken off by relations, are traceable to this simple cause of self interest, in its vilest form; because, we foolishly nurse ourselves in the belief, that those most closely bound to us by the ties of blood, are incapable of plotting against our happiness from mere sordid motives.

But, if it were necessary to dissect this fallacy, what could more entirely demonstrate the folly of such a piece of credulity in the goodness of mankind, than a simple examination of, and reflection upon, half the family law suits, that are at this very moment, pending throughout the kingdom? in which will be found—father against son—son against father—brother against sister—sister against brother, and even child against mother; all fighting against one another, to the very death, in the courts

of law ; all striving to enrich themselves, and heedless, whether, in so doing, they absolutely beggar their relations, entirely for the sake of a little wealth, which the very age of the litigants, renders it impossible that they should long enjoy. Nay, more, let any sceptic on this point, select the happiest and most united family he may know, let him be but cruel enough to throw in amongst them, like a petard, the property of a disputed will, to any extent calculated, according to their position in life, to excite their desires—away goes every other feeling to the winds ; each branch flies off to a separate attorney, and the deadliest war begins to be waged between them all, that writs and executions, poverty and broken hearts, can know !

And yet, with all this enacting before the eyes of the great mass of mankind, six days in the week, is it not wonderful, how any party can be found, on the seventh, to believe, that those who thwart their hap-

piness, and have the most direct interest in so doing, are, nevertheless, actuated by views, in which self interest forms no part.

There are people to be found who believe this; and, it may be added, there are fools to be found capable of believing any thing; and one of this extensive number was Miss Circumspect, who, after numberless eligible matches had been broken off by her brother's artful suggestions and interference, often sat before the glass, wondering, as she gazed on the remnant of her charms, how it was, that she, who had, undoubtedly, been an heiress, and a good-looking one in her day, was now reduced to become that desolate and melancholy spectator of life's amusements—a confessed old maid. I say, confessed—for, at fifty-four, few will think there remains any very great chance of single ladies altering their position. Not that Miss Circumspect—or, as she was generally called, Aunt Circumspect—had

abandoned all hopes on the subject, should a “*perfectly* eligible” opportunity present itself. This was the thing for which she had been waiting all her life; and they, who knew her brother somewhat better than she happened to know him herself, felt sure that care would be taken that no eligible opportunity did present itself. Strange as it may appear to others, it is, however, no less strange than true, that, no sooner did she hear of the arrival of Lord George, than there took possession of her silly head, an impression, that this was the very unexceptionable man come at last; and though, at the moment of his advent, she was comfortably seated in her dressing-gown, before a warm fire, in her own bed-room, the report made to her, by her maid, of his Lordship being a handsome man, in the very bloom of life, determined her instantly to take the field and make the most of the opportunity she was fully persuaded now presented itself.

Throwing down the old volume which

she was reading—one of the Leadenhall-street Minerva Press novels, which delighted our mothers—she forthwith issued orders, as we have said before, for a goodly entertainment, and began, with as little delay as possible, to prepare her toilet, for putting herself at the head of the feast, and doing no end of execution on the predestined Lord George.

Oh! treacherous Duck!—Oh! deceitful Curry!—Oh! ambuscadoed Ragout!—how little did the imperilled Portuguese auxiliar dream of the dangers that awaited him amid these enjoyments! True it is, although, in a rash hour, he contemplated running off with an heiress—yet it never was, I undertake positively to affirm, any part of his intention to form any design upon the heart, or hand, or happiness of any such an heiress as my Aunt Circumspect—and, oh! sweet Circumspect!—fair Circumspect!—when you thus so sagely called to your assistance the combined powers of fish, flesh,

fowl and champagne — four allies, than whom can better scarce be found in Venus wars—why did you not bethink you, like your long-minded and exemplary brother, of first driving from the field every thing in the shape of a rival, before you began to tax the strength of your own powers, matchless though they might be? But I will not anticipate. Even my Lord George, mercenary as he may have been, would have scorned not to afford the fairest play to sweet Circumspect, even had he known the whole of her designs! And, highly delighted at, and tickled with them, no doubt he would have been!

CHAPTER XVI.

“Lo! the wish’d for day has come at last,
That shall, for all the pains and sorrows past,
Pay to her usury of long delight;
My love is now-awake out of her dream,
And her fair eyes, like stars that dimmed were
With darksome cloud, now show their goodly beams.
More bright than Hesperus!”—EDMUND SPENSER

BEFORE the carriage had driven up to Grove Park, the postboy had succeeded, though not without considerable remonstrance, in persuading his Lordship to resign the duties of postillion, and take up again that of passenger only, his Lordship remarking, as he did so—

“I tell you what, old fellow, its all humbug, you postillions screwing us out of so much money for posting—I am convinced now of what I often suspected before, namely, that you have a great deal the best

fun of it outside – and if things were conducted as they ought to be, you ought to pay us for riding inside instead of our paying you for driving.”

At this witticism, however, the postboy simply shook his head, and his Lordship, on alighting, after some slight fear from the delay necessary to convey to Aunt Circumspect the intelligence of his arrival, was shown meanwhile into the drawing-room. As he entered, a young lady arose from a chair near the fire, and attempted to make her exit from the room, but his Lordship having insisted on not disturbing her, she, by way of an excuse for her retiring, said something about the necessity of going to inform Miss Circumspect of his Lordship’s arrival.

“ Oh,” said his Lordship very promptly, “ the servant has already done that; so pray don’t run away, for above all things on earth I abhor, to be left in a room by myself in a strange house; so do pray oblige me by the small favour of staying.” Thus

adjured, the young lady, who could not help smiling at the earnestness of his Lordship, at once consented, and, resuming her chair, Lord George took another, brought it very near to his chance companion, and for a time, we grieve to say, thought no more about Acantha Cash than if he had never heard the name of that much debated lady. Neither, when I add to the narrative of this interview, that which I am bound to state, will the reader think it very likely, that towards Acantha Cash, the excitable emotions of Lord George would ever wander again.

The lights, when Lord George entered, were placed at the other end of the room, so that he could not discern the features of his new companion, until seated beside her. At the first glance that distinctly revealed to him the speaking countenance of that exquisite being on his left hand, he hardly, as he afterwards described it, knew whether to believe himself awake or dreaming—for there, at last, sat beside him his fair

unknown—she whom he had hunted with so much assiduity for weeks, and months, and years, in every direction of London. She, indeed, for a look of whom I had so nearly seen him run over, at the foot of Albemarle Street, when I first formed his acquaintance. In an instant, to the winds—away vanished every other thought of every person. Here was his unknown and mysterious divinity found at last, and he at length indulged with the rapture of an unrestrained *tête-à-tête* with her.

To recall to his new acquaintance their former accidental meetings, to tell her, as modestly as he could, of the ardour, and futility with which he had sought her, was the work of a few seconds. But the varying colour, the sparkling eye, the tumultuous bosom, well repaid Lord George for the confession;—though the lady seemed too shy and agitated to make much reply, and for some moments felt painfully conscious of the admiration with which he re-

garded her. “Devil’s in it,” muttered his Lordship, “what strange fate possesses me to-day, I do nothing but run against beautiful women. A few hours ago I thought Miss Curtis one of the most exquisite creatures it was possible to find in the world—I drive a few miles further on, and behold my long-worshipped and unknown inamorata—a being with whom she is no more to compare than Minerva to Venus,”—and here it occurred to the gallant officer, as I have already hinted, that his admiration was a little more particular than the lady found to be quite pleasant. In fact, muttering some inaudible words as an excuse, she was about to rise and leave the room, when his Lordship, suddenly turning round, said, in that funny eccentric manner, which all who ever heard him, acknowledged to possess the undoubted power of dispelling everything like formality—

“I pray you, don’t leave the room, unless you wish me to come after you. Why do

you want to run away? You'll make me think that I've offended you, if you leave me thus suddenly. Tell me how I can amuse you, or rather how you can amuse me, for as Sir Simper is not at home, and Miss Circumspect is, I suppose, a maiden lady of some standing in the service, it is not impossible that she may have the conscience to keep us here *tête-à-tête* till her curls are arrayed according to the very latest fashion." Lord George beheld a smile on the lips of the fair girl as he said this, and taking those tempting dimples as a sort of warranty that her reserve was coined, looked round, and to his great joy espied a harp.

"Ha! I see you are musical, and here is a song which I dare say you had scarcely finished when I, ferocious savage, burst in and interrupted your sweet strains." To this there was a sort of denial given, but it was so faintly done, that it had all the force of a confession, and Lord George, turning

over the music leaves, soon found a favourite solo, and ventured to request its performance. If the mere beauty of the face had transported him, how was his delight increased when he listened to the exquisite melody of the voice that accompanied it! Nothing ever appeared half so delicious to his ears before—he was enraptured, and before the strains had well ended, could Acantha have been able to look in on him, she would have indeed rejoiced at the thrall under which he already laboured, and have augured very strongly as to the issue of his acquaintance with that gentle and lovely person, to whose silvery accents, as he now listened, he felt a fascination never known till then. Even in those few minutes it is astonishing what a change had been wrought in all his sentiments. As he had jestingly prophesied, Aunt Circumspect's toilet was not made in a minute, and during the hour the *tête-à-tête* of our friends lasted, Lord George's long-worshipped divinity conti-

nued to sing to him with the utmost good nature one sweet strain after another, until fearing that she might become exhausted, even he, enraptured as he was, forbore to ask for any further indulgence, and led her back to the seat on which he had found her seated on entering. But instead of the flip-pant and almost free manner with which he had before addressed her, there was now evident, in his tone and accent, a degree of softness and respect, for which even he was almost at a loss to account. Nothing could be more opposed to the style and manner of the beauty from whom he had so lately parted, than that of her by whose side he was now seated, and the contrast helped to complete the charm. With a feeling of pain he at length saw the door open for the majestic sailing in of Aunt Circumspect, who, in all the majesty of a very considerable person, now came forward sufficiently frilled and ruffed to have satisfied the jealousy of a courtier of even Queen Elizabeth's reign.

The look of displeasure and surprise that passed across the brow of Circumspect on beholding the sharer of Lord George's *tête-à-tête*, at once explained to him that there was something wrong going on, though he was unable to say what. However, his reception, as may be conceived, was most gracious, and having been informed that Sir Simper was shortly expected, Lord George was anxious that they should wait supper for him, but this, Circumspect at once overruled, insisting that his Lordship must be exceedingly fatigued after his exertion, and that supper was a meal of which her brother never partook. Under these circumstances, as soon as the refreshment was announced, Lord George gallantly presented an arm to each of the ladies, and went to open the campaign in the dining-room. To any man who has some fun in him—if there is one thing on earth more exciting than another—if there is one circumstance that can especially call forth the spirit of

frolic more than another, it is the presence of a woman for whom the speaker feels the first stirrings of that mighty passion we worship under the title of Love. This, then, was the very case of Lord George on the night in question. Every species of conversational amusement that could be desired to be possessed, he seemed able to summon at will for the entertainment of those around him, an ability which, to do him justice, he exerted to the utmost, and having moreover taken care that his hearer's champagne glasses, should never be empty—a most material ingredient for good conversationists—at the end of supper, when the parties retired to their rest, both the ladies had in their own minds decided him to be the most amusing person that they had ever met. While this was proceeding, Lord George was dying to know who could be the beautiful songstress that had made such an impression upon him, and he was devising in his own mind, how he should be able

to obtain any information on this matter, deprived as he was at present of that conduit pipe of all useful tittle-tattle in a respectable family, his valet. Just, however, as the ladies were retiring, a carriage was heard driving up in the court-yard below.

“ ‘There is my brother_come at last,’ said Circumspect.

“ ‘How the devil will he receive me?’” muttered Lord George to himself. “ ‘Of course, he will wonder what the deuce brought me here, and, I doubt not, I shall have some trouble with the old blackguard. Before I had seen that face, and heard the voice of that young syren,” fixing his eyes on the lady opposite to him, whom Aunt Circumspect designated as Miss Florence, “ this would have been a matter of grief; as it is, upon my soul, I don’t care much about it. I came here to run off with somebody to Gretna Green; and, that I shall certainly do, so I think the sooner I can take thither that little darling opposite, if she’ll have me,

the better. She may not be rich, but she'll do infinitely more justice to the family discernment than would the golden monster. After all, I don't see what's the use of money to me; I shall be sure to spend it. I always did; and, if I have none—" but his Lordship felt it unnecessary to pursue this hypothesis any further: and the whole train of his mutterings was brought to a close by the entrance of Fi Fa, who had been sent by Sir Simper to announce the fact, that the latter did not intend returning home that night, but would sleep at a friend's.

"Oh! Miss Circumspect!" said his Lordship, across whose mind there suddenly darted one of those bright ideas that at times illumine the intellects of all great men, especially sent, no doubt, to produce some marked influence on the affairs of the nether world.

"My Lord!" said Circumspect, immediately all attention.

"Will you be kind enough," continued

his Lordship, “to order Fi Fa to remain up till I retire to rest, and then come to my room, and render me his assistance; for, unfortunately, it did not occur to me to bring my valet.”

“Oh! certainly, my Lord,” said the enraptured spinster, who would have given him any thing, to the half of her kingdom, had he thought fit to ask it. Fi Fa, however, did not appear altogether pleased at this confusion of words—namely, the being ordered, and playing valet, and so on, there being only one person, in his idea of things, who had any right to make any such demand on his services; and it was not always, even to him, that they were yielded in the most unhesitating manner.

In his way, Fi Fa was quite a character, if not absolutely a genius; and, among his other peculiarities, piqued himself upon never allowing any one, as he phrased it, to take a liberty with him. When, there-

fore, this request was first made, Miss Circumspect looked towards Fi Fa, as much as to say, do you hear what is wanted of you? On which that young man coolly looked round upon his Lordship, with the utmost contempt, saying—

“I can’t come to-night; I’ve other things to do, besides putting young gentlemen to bed.”

As this was the first symptom of any thing like impertinence that the youth had shown, Lord George looked up, with considerable astonishment, as well he might, at this singular product of Sir Simper’s household; while Miss Circumspect, considerably vexed, rose from table. Lord George immediately guessed that her object was, to persuade the refractory Fi Fa to comply with the request made to him; but, considering it a better piece of breeding, not to pretend to see this instance of bad discipline among his entertainer’s dependants, he proceeded to reward his virtue in this

respect, by applying himself with all his energies, in Miss Circumspect's absence, to offer unbounded love to his entrancing enslaver.

“Well, Miss Circumspect,” said Lord George, as soon as my aunt returned to the room, “since we are not to have the pleasure of Sir Simper's presence, at his own board to night, permit me to propose his health, in his absence.”

This occasioned the drawing of another champagne cork, the contents of the bottle his Lordship took care should be duly shared by his hostess. As for Florence—for by that sweet name was the younger lady called—she so long and so firmly declined any further potations, that his Lordship spared her retiring modesty from being pressed on the point, and thus she was permitted to escape, soon afterwards, to her room.

Now, although I am far from insinuating that his Lordship is open to any reproach

as to personal weakness of character ; yet, it must be confessed, that a wonderful partiality for that fourth estate—usually denominated the bottle, existed in every portion of his Lordship's family—the female branches excepted.

Now, the devil, we suppose it was, as soon as Florence had retired for the night, put it into the head of his Lordship,—that if Aunt Circumspect was so funny a body when sober, what an inimitable soul she must prove when “screwed;” a style of reasoning, which I do not in any way pretend to uphold, or approve; but the fact was so, and we simply state the facts as they occurred.

Now, on behalf of Aunt Circumspect's conduct upon that night, it certainly was, to say the least of it, very singular, and quite at variance, as every one afterwards admitted, with the even tenor of her life before. But still, it must be told, that Lord George, who, notwithstanding his anti-amorous speeches to Acantha, was no

mean hand in all that related to the soft and tender flame, was on this occasion, at no loss to read, through the spinster's manner, a very fair interpretation of her feelings towards himself. Taking advantage of this circumstance, he at first began, simply to play the flirt with her, from a wicked intention of getting her to admire the bottle; and then, as this reprehensible sport proceeded, it occurred to him, that, although he had resolved not to run off with the pock-marked heiress, but the poor, the beautiful, and sweet-toned dependant, the very best line for his future success would be, to pretend a violent love for the spinster, and so get on the blind side of her. This most improper "*ruse*" succeeded immediately.

Lord George was, already, quite sufficiently elevated with wine, for any decent society, and ought not to have thought of taking any more. But, it has been already hinted, that on these matters, he was not

always as prudent as he should be ; so now, enjoying the sport of the moment, he went on filling his glass, and—we need not add, of emptying it; meanwhile making the most overwhelming and the tenderest speeches to sensitive Circumspect. Nor was this all, for he would insist upon filling her glass also, and seeing that she drank it, contriving, every now and then, to give her one of those gentle squeezes of the hand, which are supposed to be among the privileges of courtship.

Thus, critically circumstanced, great allowance must be made for the lady, if, in conclusion, it has to be told, that she was fairly taken in ; and, on retiring for the night, did so, with the full impression, not only that his Lordship was her most devoted admirer, but, that he had come to Grove Park, for the express purpose, previously arranged, she had no doubt, between her brother and himself, of paying his devoirs ; and under this impression,

she quite looked forward to the moment, when Sir Simper should arrive, and give her all further and necessary particulars for her information.

“He must be a man of large fortune,” said Aunt Circumspect; “for my brother would not have sent him here, unless he had been ‘*perfectly eligible.*’”

CHAPTER XVII.

“ My men were clothed all in green,
And they did ever wait on thee ;
They set thee up, they took thee down,
They served thee with humility,
Thy foot might not once touch the ground ;
And yet thou would'st not love me.

HANDFULL OF PLEASANT DELITES.

AT last, however, enraptured as Circumspect was, with every thing belonging to his Lordship, even she, saw the necessity of getting him safely ensconced in his chamber—no easy matter with a man who seemed determined to finish the bottle, so long as ever there might be a bottle to finish, let what might arrive. Already, there had become unfortunately apparent in his speech, divers little hesitations, for which the wine cup is not the best remedy ; and these had been succeeded with wonderful rapidity, by that

distressing symptom, the hiccup. Warned of the future, therefore, by these little preludes, Miss Circumspect determined to get our hero to his couch ; and as the best means of doing so, made at once an abrupt departure for her own ; his Lordship, who would not see the reason of this, uttered many fond protestations at parting, and then sat quietly down, to realize his previous intention of seeing the bottle out. This was speedily done, by which time, Fi Fa, had been ordered in to attend him, and, in reality, to prevent this consummation, so little to be wished. But Fi Fa had, nevertheless, resolutely resolved to let his Lordship in for it ; and with that purpose, stood steadily by his chair, and witnessed glass after glass of the wine taken, until the whole was finished ; then he stepped forward, and offered his Lordship an arm to bed.

“Now, Sir, tell me who the devil you are,” Lord George began, as soon as he had

once got firmly hold of Fi Fa's arm, "tell me, Sir, who you are and what you are, and all about you."

"Why, my Lord," said Fi Fa, "I've not much to tell when all's told. All I can say of myself is, that my name is Fi Fa—that I was Sir Simper's clerk, and now, I suppose, I am his secretary."

"Ah," said Lord George, "you are just the fellow I wanted to catch hold of—wasn't it you who so impertinently refused to lend me your services to disrobe? you good for nothing blackguard!—were it not that I am unfortunately forgiving to a fault, I very much suspect, Fi Fa, that I should have to break your head at this very moment."

"I hope not, Sir," replied Fi Fa very coolly, "if you were to break my head I could not give you my arm any longer, and in that case I am very certain that the next thing, after the breaking of my head, would be the cracking of your own."

"Why what do you mean, you impudent

scoundrel?" demanded Lord George, with many hiccups and much hesitation, "do you mean to—to—to insinuate that I am drunk, Sir?"

"No, my Lord, no dependant ever saw a gentleman drunk yet."

"Why, faith, you are a sarcastic blackguard, are you?"

"Certainly not, my Lord."

"But I say you are, Sir, a most sarcastic blackguard—and when I say you are, Sir, I will thank you not to attempt to contradict me."

"Very well, then, my Lord, I am."

"I told you you were—and what's more, you are a Briareusian blackguard, I perceive."

"A what, my Lord?"

"A Briareusian blackguard, Sir—don't I speak plain?"

"You do, my Lord—painfully plain—there is no mistake about your language."

"There he goes again—there he begins

his sarcasm," and Lord George turned out the palms of his hands, and gave a most expressive look at the dead wall, quite as if he mistook it, which, no doubt, he did, for some third party, some unconcerned spectator, to whom he might safely breathe the wrongs which the audacious F'i Fa was, to his mind, putting on him. In this manner, and in similar discourse, they at length reached the summit of the stairs, where Lord George came to a dead stop.

"Now, F'i Fa," said his Lordship, "I insist on it, that I won't go another step with you, until you inform me whether you are a Briareusian blackguard or not?"

"Why, my Lord, I don't know what that means," said F'i Fa.

"What it means, you blockhead," said his Lordship, "it means do you or do you not indulge in a plurality of hands and heads, and so on."

"Why, my Lord, do you really mean to ask me such a question?"

“ Yes, knave, I do—that is the question, as Mr. Pierrepont says when he has his wig on, and now answer it.”

“ Well, then, my Lord, if I must tell you, I say I am not a Briareusian blackguard.”

“ Then, Sir, begone—begone, Sir, this instant—the truth is not in you—I won’t be lighted to my *bon reposs* by such a palterer with facts, or as we should have said in good old English, a mean, contemptible, lying varlet; and dare you then declare that you are not a Briareusian, sirrah? when I have been stedfastly regarding you for the last ten minutes! and if I ever saw a man with two heads and four hands in my life, I see him in you. I should not be at all surprised that you are in league with the devil. You lawyers always were accounted to be first cousins to his Majesty, and, I have no doubt whatever, you make him a most fitting servant—there, Sir, let go my arm, I say you are a Briareusian, and I can have nothing more to do with you.” With

a sudden effort his Lordship freed himself from Fi Fa's support, and snatching at the candle which the latter had continued to hold for him, notwithstanding all his abuse—his Lordship now made a precipitate rush for his bed-room door; and here, in order to make intelligible what further occurred on this memorable night, we must so far describe the premises of Grove Park as to explain the position of some of the bed-room doors. The house was a large old fashioned building, with a wide oak staircase possessing balustrades that might almost have served, in point of strength and solidity, for London Bridge. After traversing the hall below around three of its four sides, and displaying on the way several large landings, the staircase terminated at the top in a large square space, from whence opened several of the best bed-chambers, and among these were two, the doors of which stood close together. The chambers within were first Aunt Circum-

spect's room, and next to it one of what were called the stranger's rooms, in other words, visitors' rooms, and which, from being fitted up with a little more particularity than the rest, were exclusively devoted to the purposes of hospitality. 'The visitors' room next to that of Miss Circumspect, was one generally used, as it commanded a fine view over the park, and, being considered, therefore, the one most aired, was selected by Miss Circumspect for her elevated admirer.

CHAPTER XVIII.

‘ At Bacchus’ feast none shall her mete,
Ne at no wanton playe.”

UNCERTAIN.

DIRECTLY opposite to the junction of the two doors, described in our last chapter, stood Lord George, when he made that virtuous declaration against untruthfulness which we have already recorded. With many tipsy men, nothing is often more annoying than the dread that their weakness should be discovered, a fact that is rather apt to ensue on inebriety, and such was the case at present with Lord George. Thinking to convince Fi Fa of his perfect sobriety, he persisted in staggering on towards the double junction of portals before

him, pushing away with great determination the hand of his friendly attendant, and still muttering as he did so—

“A perfect Briareusian—a perfect Briareusian!” he rushed on with still more vehemence to the port of safety or rather refuge, which he conceived that he saw before him. Now, in all human statistics, it may be laid down as an infallible principle, that, wherever there are two paths to be taken, it is the invariable fate of man to choose the wrong; nor was Lord George an exception to the general rule on this occasion. With as much determination as if he had already taken the lady to church, he directed his unsteady steps to the chaste couch of Circumspect.

“Not there! my Lord, not there!” cried Fi Fa, quite alarmed, but his Lordship paid not the slightest attention to this warning; onward he still continued to roll at a rapid rate, though not in the most direct line, making now a tack, as it were, to the right;

then fetching up his lee-way by another leg to the left.

“ My Lord ! my Lord ! ” roared Fi Fa, “ I tell you, my Lord, that is the wrong room. If you go in there, you will never hear the last of it ; that’s Miss Circumspect’s room ! ”

“ I know it, you blockhead, I know all about it,” coolly muttered in reply his Lordship, of whom it is to be hoped, though he was sufficiently bold to make this assertion, that he nevertheless did not understand what had been said to him. Now no one in the world was more delighted with a little piece of mischief than Fi Fa, whenever he dared to pursue that somewhat dangerous recreation. He had not, it must be confessed, been altogether pleased with Lord George’s deportment towards himself, and now having done all that might have been expected of him in warning the noble Lord off the forbidden premises, it must be admitted, that he had a sly delight in waiting

to see what would be the result so soon as his Lordship should rush against the door and insist on opening the same, it being all the while secured on the inside, by the virtuous Circumspect, against any such profane intrusion.

“He must come round to me at last,” muttered Fi Fa, “to show him his right room; he is so blind drunk now, he will never find it himself. He must come round to me at last.”

Holding this belief, our readers may imagine what was the worthy Fi Fa’s consternation, when he not only beheld Circumspect’s door give way before the somewhat rude assault of his Lordship, but perceived that the gallant nobleman marched boldly into the enemy’s quarters, and coolly closed the portal behind him. For a moment, the look of surprise in Fi Fa’s face amounted almost to horror. He stood gazing at the violated door, much as if he expected it to walk off its hinges to sympathize with him.

At last, however, there came to his relief the conviction, that Miss Circumspect could not yet have retired to rest, but was, in all probability, enjoying, with Miss Florence, one of those pre-somnolent *conversazioni*, in which it is the delight of ladies to indulge in one another's rooms. At this remembrance, there also occurred to him the laughable dilemma that must arise, as soon as the fastidious damsel should discover the noble Lord, that object of her tender admiration, fast asleep in her own bed. Irresistibly tickled with the picture thus presented to his mind's eye, Fì F'a could scarcely forbear from indulging in violent laughter at the scene that must necessarily ensue; and thinking it a thousand pities to spoil so good a joke, he resolved to content himself, by retiring to a distance, and watching the advent of the chaste proprietress of the room. His patience was not doomed to be very greatly exhausted; for, scarcely had he taken up a position in a dark corner of

the gallery, and extinguished his own candle, when he heard the pit-a-pat footstep of Miss Circumspect rapidly approaching. But, great as the fun was that he expected, it was exceeded by the fact, of the fair spinster pausing outside the door of the room, which she supposed to contain his Lordship, and there going through some mute evolutions, which looked wondrously like invoking a prayer on the head of its supposed occupant. Whether this were so or not, Aunt Circumspect certainly did pause at the door in question; then, after a brief interval, went onward to her own room. With the utmost quietude she opened the door. This Fi Fa expected; but, immediately after that, he thought it only decorous and proper that she ought to have given something in the shriek line, if it was only a scream of ordinary power. Attentively, however, as Master Fi Fa listened, he could detect nothing that came at all near to the anticipated sound. Three mi-

minutes passed away—five—seven—ten :—at last, Fi Fa's patience was beginning to be rapidly exhausted ; and, calling to mind the extraordinary assertion of Lord George, on being told into whose room he had intruded—namely, “ ‘ That he knew all about it,” Fi Fa was almost inclined to arrive at some conclusion uncharitable to the fair fame of the virtuous Circumspect.

“ Well !” muttered Fi Fa, “ if they are going to arrange the thing between them with so little ceremony, I don't think there is much use in my waiting outside the door—there's not much amusement in that, at any rate ; so, if she doesn't make a bolt of it speedily, I'll give the matter up, for my part.”

Scarcely had this last grumble, however, passed Fi Fa's lips, when a violent noise was heard in the spinster's room, followed by a scream, that would have satisfied the scruples of the nicest punctillionist in Europe. The door was suddenly thrown wide open,

and out darted Aunt Circumspect, her hair closely done up in curl-papers, and her figure equally disguised by a large wrapping-robe.

“Oh! good heavens!—good gracious!—how shocking!—Where’s my light?—Is he coming?—Oh! Florence!—Matilda!—Mary!—That good-for-nothing Fi Fa!”

“That’s right—blame Fi Fa for everything!—It must be him!” exclaimed the listener, as he heard Miss Circumspect giving vent to these disconnected cries, “though how I’m to help my Lord’s getting drunk, and you yourself sitting at the table, I don’t quite understand, Miss Circumspect, either.”

Meanwhile, the alarmed spinster, after looking back, to ascertain that the gallant Lord George was not in pursuit of her, continued her flight straight on, until she reached the room of Florence, whom she immediately summoned from her bed; and, ringing up her own maid, Fi Fa quickly

heard his name in such request, that he could not avoid coming forward. As he advanced towards Miss Florence's room, he contrived with a violent effort to get the better of the tendency to laughter which oppressed him; and, on reaching within a few paces of the point where the ladies were holding a conversation, Miss Circumspect's maid met him, and unfolded the difficulty in which they felt themselves placed.

The whole of this account Fi Fa very wisely received as a matter quite new, and expressed great surprise that such a direful and shocking accident should have occurred; but, at the same time, especially begged the influence of the damsel, to assure her mistress, that he, Fi Fa, was not at all to blame in the matter; that he had done every thing in his power to get his Lordship safely to bed, but that the latter had been so obstreperous, no persuasions had been sufficient to induce him to be

properly guided. On hearing this explanation, the abigail assured Fi Fa that no blame was attributed to him in the matter, but that all now required of him, was, to help herself and one or two of the rest of the servants to carry his Lordship out of Miss Circumspect's room into his own, seeing that he had laid himself down with his dirty boots on Miss Circumspect's counterpane, and had coolly extinguished the candle, by clapping it under the pillow — a plan which Miss Circumspect considered neither beneficial to the linen, nor conducive to the general safety. On these propositions Fi Fa joined, as he safely might; and having agreed to lend his assistance, the maid-servant returned to express his willingness to her mistress; and they then all proceeded in a body—that is, Miss Circumspect, Florence, Miss Circumspect's maid, and Fi Fa, to the chamber wherein securely slumbered the unconscious son of Mars.

As soon as the *quartette* we have named

had gained the interior of the bedroom, a truly edifying sight presented itself. The bed stood with its head against that portion of the wall which was in a line with the door, while the foot of the couch was pointed towards the window. It was a large cumbrous four-post bed of the English make, hung round with dark-green hangings of sufficient capacity to have shrouded an elephant. And this fact may, perhaps, in some degree, account for Circumspect never having perceived that, on the side furthest from the door, the object of all her tenderness and anxiety had thrown himself, fully accoutred as he was, boots, &c., &c., on the coverlet, not with his head towards the pillow, but extending, in that careless manner which marked all his actions, towards the other side of the bed, which he thus laid directly across. He appeared to have thrown himself down without taking the trouble of previously getting rid even of his candlestick ; for, just at the very

point where his hand now lay, was seen the green baize end of that illuminator sticking out from beneath the exquisite pillow of Aunt Circumspect, fringed and decorated, though it was, with net and lace, in a manner that might have become the couch of Psyche, expecting the speedy arrival of Cupid.

“ Dear me,” exclaimed Aunt Circumspect, as she beheld this sight, “ how very tired travelling must have made his Lordship ; what a lucky escape he has had from any accident by fire !”

“ Why, ma’am, as to that,” said the unceremonious Fi Fa, “ I think we have all had a wonderful share of good fortune there.”

“ No remarks, Sir, if you please,” was the tart rejoinder of Circumspect. “ If we begin to talk too loud we shall wake his Lordship, and he might feel distressed at the idea of having entered a room that was not intended for him.”

“ Oh ! yes, ma’am, he would, I know, be.

dreadfully distressed at that," replied Fi Fa, "and indeed he said as much to me as he was coming up the stairs."

"Hush! hush!" said the Aunt, "do let me beg of you to be quiet; just content yourselves with taking each of you a corner of the counterpane, and so we may carry him out without his being at all aware that he has ever intruded."

"But don't you think, Miss Circumspect, that he is too heavy?" suggested Florence.

"My dear, whenever I wish to do a kind action, I think the worst way in the world to accomplish it, is to raise difficulties, whatever the subject may be; and if you'll take a hint from me, you will learn to do the same." With divers raps of this description, my Aunt contrived to stifle any audible laughter from her assistants in the work before her; and, at length, all four having each taken a corner of the counterpane, they succeeded in weighing this Royal George, and bearing him slowly out of my

Aunt's room, and accomplished the difficulty of getting him as far as the corridor

Stop! stop! my dear Aunt, do stop!" cried Florence, at this critical juncture, "I have something I so wish to say to you."

"What is the matter, my dear child? What is the matter," peevishly replied the elder lady, who did anything but relish being thus interrupted in the midst of her operations. "What can you have to say now. If it is anything material, pray speak at once, and have done with it."

"Well, my dear Aunt, it really is most material," replied Florence, as the whole party came to a dead pause; "and it is this—don't you remember, in Don Quixote, where they put Sancho Panza in a blanket? do you know, I have often longed to know how they tossed him. Now, do let us just make one little experiment with Lord George."

"Child! child! I command that you desist," almost roared the elder lady, shock-

ed to the soul at the idea of tossing a Lord like a common informer.

“ Oh, my dear aunt, he'll never know it,” said Florence, not so easily turned from her humour. “ Do let us make one trial, just one little toss, he'll never know it.” But my Aunt was inflexible, and looked such daggers, that even Florence's love of drollery, dared not carry the freak any further ; and so my Lord, without more ado, was borne along the passage, until he reached that port, for all distressed gentlemen in his situation, his own bed room. Here, having taken the coverlet from his couch, they replaced it with the one they had just brought in ; and then leaving Fi Fa to take off his Lordship's neck-cloth, &c., &c., hastened to their own couches, considerably relieved by the successful issue of their novel attempt at transplanting.

When Lord George awoke on the following morning, he became painfully sensible, that his deep potations on the previous

night, had been distinguished by some peculiar character. — “What the devil was I doing last night?” muttered he, rubbing his temples, and looking with a longing eye towards the water bottle. “It must have been very bad wine,” and then, after a pause, he added, “surely I never could have been silly enough—” and there he stopped short—rubbed his head—staggered from his couch—reached the water bottle, and after a hearty draught, reiterated his impression as to the wine, by exclaiming;— “Yes, it must have been very bad wine,— what a d—d shame to give a man bad wine! Next to absolute assassination, I don’t know anything worse than taking away his health, by the insidious trick of giving him cheap liquors. Too bad, too bad, very bad wine indeed!” then, as he approached the large cheval glass, he suddenly started back, on seeing that he still wore nearly the whole of his clothes, with the exception of his neck-cloth and boots.

“Why, by Jove,” he muttered, “one would think from appearances, that I had too much last night. Surely, that never can have been so? Ah! George, George, at your old tricks again; this is pretty, isn’t it? and on the first night of making an acquaintance with a ‘*respectable*’ family. Upon my soul, this is too bad—it is indeed. I see, I shall never earn a decent character of any man; I wonder now of what tom-foolery I was guilty; well, I suppose I shall hear all about it;—very provoking, very annoying. If I was only a Catholic, I might say a few masses, and think no more about it. But, as I am a Protestant gentleman, this is, really, very distressing; let me see,—I know I was making love to some one last night, who was it? was it to the young, or to the old lady? By Jove, I fancy it was to both of them; and now I think of it—how provoking to have made such a brute of oneself before that sweet and interesting little darling, I wonder what she is?—a

companion, I suppose, or something of that sort. It strikes me, she won't be that long, for I feel very plainly, that nobody can or shall prevent me from marrying her. I really don't think I could exceed in this mode, if I married such an interesting little darling as that; upon my soul, I have a mighty longing resolution to do it. By St. Patrick, I will, let what will come of it. When a man once makes up his mind to do the fearful deed with somebody, half the mischief is over; and having determined to screw my courage to the marrying point, marry I will. It will take a deal of trouble off one's mind; and as to the money part of the business, a man may consent to let himself starve, but he must provide for his wife; a noble lord can always insure a pig and a pratee in Ould Ireland; and the thing once done, all further thought about the business will be spared me. So soon as I have known the lady twenty-four hours—I think that is a good maritime allowance

for any undertaking—I shall pop the question, and gain her consent. I'm sure she looked it, though she didn't know it. So that affair is settled. Instead of marrying the heiress, I shall take my wife back to the parish ; and, if, after that, I should chance to murder a Prime Minister or two, I think the evidence of lunacy may be fairly established, to the satisfaction of any jury. Now to learn, of what tom-foolery I really have been guilty." As Lord George said this, he rang the bell ; and very shortly, in answer to the summons, appeared Fi Fa.

" I say, my boy," said his Lordship, " can you tell me whether I was very considerably drunk last night, or only moderately intoxicated ? " and Lord George turned round to look at Fi Fa, as he put this question ; slipping at the same time, a couple of guineas into his hand.

" Why, my Lord," said Fi Fa, in his dry quiet manner ; " you see, my Lord, as lawyers would say, there is a double issue

involved in your inquiry; first of all, were you drunk at all? and secondly, if drunk, to what extent? Now, my Lord, I think it must be admitted that you were drunk."

"Yes, I am afraid that must undoubtedly have been the case."

"But, for a drunken nobleman, I think I may add, your Lordship was as moderate as could be expected."

"Ah! then, what did I do?" demanded his Lordship, who saw an extraordinary twinkle in the other's eye.

"Why, my Lord, you only insisted on getting into my mistress's bed with your boots on, and popping the lighted candle under the laced pillow; but, with that exception, my Lord, nothing occurred more than usual."

"Getting into your mistress's bed, Fi Fa! Why, what do you mean—this isn't your mistress's room—is it?"

"No, my Lord, this isn't my mistress's."

room, because she had a fancy to sleep in her own herself."

"Well, then, did she actually come and find me there, or what?"

"Why, I suppose she did, my Lord. I heard her lady's maid telling in the kitchen, that her mistress was just going to get into bed at the side, as it might be, when she found your boots sticking out at the very place she had intended to put her feet in. All I know about it is, that I heard a great shout, my Lord, and my mistress's lady's-maid came to me, to ask, if I would assist in carrying you out in the counterpane, just as crumbs go from table after dinner—which I accordingly did; and I only hope your Lordship had as comfortable a ride as the peculiarity of the circumstances permitted."

"D—n it, how very droll!"

"It was indeed, droll, my Lord. We all agreed, my Lord, in the servants'-hall, it was the drollest thing that ever happened in this house; and, if your Lordship is

likely to amuse us every night in that manner, we had rather you should stop with us a month than a fortnight. We are rather dull, at most times, in these country places, as it is very rarely we can get any of the aristocracy to come down for our special amusement."

"So I suppose," said Lord George. "And now, Fi Fa, tell me, was Miss Circumspect in a great rage?"

"Oh dear! no, my Lord—nothing of the sort. She's very peculiar in her notions; and, I believe, she thinks it the greatest honour that ever happened to her."

"Then, you do think I may venture down to breakfast without having my head bitten off."

"Oh! my Lord, as to that, unless your Lordship takes some especial notice of the fact, you won't hear the slightest allusion to it by Miss Circumspect; for she has given orders to her maid not to have the subject brought up in any way."

“ And now, Fi Fa, tell me, who is that Miss Florence I saw last night ?”

“ Why, poor creature, nobody knows exactly who she is. Some say she is a niece of Sir Simper’s—some say that she is only his ward—others say that she is the step-daughter of Sir Simper by a dead wife—but, anyhow, a kinder person, or a better, never existed.”

“ Oh ! a connexion of Sir Simper’s, is she ? I had no notion of that. Who was her father ?”

“ A Captain Rawdon in the Navy, my Lord.”

“ Ah ! Rawdon—Rawdon — Rawdon—I don’t remember to have heard much of him. Was he a man of any property ?” carelessly added his Lordship, as he mixed round the lather in his shaving-dish.

“ Miss Florence may have about two hundred a-year, my Lord,” replied Fi Fa, with a smile, which Lord George, at the moment, interpreted to signify, “ knowingly

as you put your question, I am up to the full purport of it, and so you need not attempt to blind me."

"Two hundred a-year! What a shame that such a beautiful girl should only have two hundred a-year!"

"Yes, my Lord, commonly speaking, young ladies' fortunes ought to be left to be fixed by their lovers; but, as I hear Miss Circumspect's bell ring, perhaps, my Lord, you will allow me to absent myself for a few minutes; for I expect my mistress is anxious to enquire for your Lordship's health, after the fatigues of last night, which she seemed to think was the cause of your indisposition."

"Oh! certainly; but just tell me first, what has become of Miss Acantha Cash, that was residing here? I want to send on a packet that I was to deliver to her."

A smile of such arch meaning stole over the countenance of Fi Fa, as his Lordship mentioned the name of Miss Cash, that the

former, from some vague feeling, felt himself unable to meet it; and, withdrawing his gaze from the face of the other, Fi Fa immediately replied—

“Oh! my Lord, you won’t fall in with Miss Cash here. She’s gone on a visit to some friends.”

Lord George longed to say, “To whom—where—when?” But, whether from a feeling that the other knew what was passing in his mind, or any other cause, his courage, usually so great, here temporarily deserted him, and he, merely answered—
“Oh!”

Fi Fa, perceiving that no further question was put to him, withdrew.

END OF VOL. II.

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